LETTERS

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LETTERS

OF

ANNA SEWARD.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

J. JOHNSON, ESQ.

High Lake, Sept. 20, 1794.

MY dear friend, whence could arise the unfounded idea, that this period possesses no poetic powers superior to mine?—Waving that subject, permit me to assure you that it pains me to decline any request of yours; but, besides the despair I feel of better verse, than I can write, obtaining the public attention in these perilous times, my opinions and principles are repellant to the attempt. I durst not run the slightest risk of strengthening the apprehensions of the public concerning an evil which appears to me entirely imaginary, viz. that the government of this country is likely to become despotic. Surely all the danger lies on the other side.

We have seen the dreadful consequences which ensued, and are yet ensuing, upon the concessions

granted by a benevolent and yielding monarch to the encroaching, rapacious, and insatiable claims of the populace, too ready to become the dupes of individual ambition, which, for its own dark and selfish purposes, misleads them by shews of advantage, the fallacy of which their contracted understandings cannot detect.

Believing that, oppressive as the old government of France had been, yet that the miseries it inflicted were beyond comparison less terrible than those imposed by its present reasonless, lawless, and murderous republic—believing also, that its lamentable transition from bad to worse, resulted from those concessions on the part of the king and court, which at the time appeared to us all so reasonable, just, and proper to be granted; how wrong would it be in me to try to excite this nation to make similar demands!—this nation, to which all the grievances are unknown that afforded France a plausible pretext for entering upon her infamous system of confiscation, plunder, and massacre.

I cannot be persuaded that England is in the slightest danger of becoming an absolute monarchy. The principles of the protestant religion —the toleration laws, and the trials by juries, form a wall of defence on that side the precipice, which I believe to be impregnable; while, I am

equally convinced, that if we are to be preserved from the shocking calamities of anarchy, it must be by guardian severity, by watchful and unrelaxing vigour on the part of government.

If, indeed, it should be found impossible for the constitution of Britain to preserve that stationary point, which you justly desire to see preserved, whom, or what are we to thank for that deplored impossibility but the base endeavours of those system-mongers, who call themselves philosophers?—by the baseless fabric of whose innovating schemes, a large part of our community have been and are yet deluded.

Unhappy must be those countries where tyrannies are practised similar to those you have instanced—but from inquisitorial oppression our religion secures us; and even they who groan under its yoke, are far less miserable than the slaves of anarchy in France. The severest laws, being known, their penalties may be avoided; and under the hardest restrictions obedience may give us safety; but the annals of democratic anarchy evince the impossibility of guarding either our property or our life, beneath the perpetual fluctuation of its wild decrees. To obey the mandates of the meteor-tyrants, is to become fatally obnoxious to their successors, when, at the capricious award of the mob, influenced by the machi-

nations of their rivals, they shoot headlong from their spheres.

The reign of Popish Mary formed a dreadful period in our history. Seventy victims passed through fire to her Moloch-superstition; but by what dread multiplication are we to count the victims of the guillotine?

Henry the VIII. tried to make himself absolute; and by the comparatively less perfect state of juridical doom, and by the non-existence of the toleration laws, approached nearer to despotism than, under their present influence, it is possible to approach. Certainly he had a very contracted understanding, and a very tyrannic spirit; yet what were the terrors and oppressions they produced, compared to those of France at present? The reign of Elizabeth equally approached to despotism; yet, as she was a woman of sense, England possessed prosperity and happiness beneath the shade of her sceptre.

If, therefore, our seditious fellow-subjects will, by their incendiary *prints* and declamations, and by their dangerous and rebel plots, oblige the legislature to continue the suspension of the habeas corpus act—abridging our liberties to secure them from utter destruction—far be from me any attempt to stimulate the people to resist restraints which treasons to the constitution have rendered

necessary! Should those treasons proceed so far as to make it impossible to preserve our constitution as it now stands, beneath whose influence, though it may not be free from human, and therefore inevitable imperfection, we live in the full protection of life's dearest blessings;—if one of the calamities must be ours, I see no proportion in the degree of evil between a lawless republic and a monarchy approaching despotism, even nearly as did that of Henry the VIII., and of his daughter Elizabeth.

But I repeat, that of the infinitely less evil I see no danger, while we seem approaching the brink of the immeasurable mischief, and that the least relaxation in the reins of power would plunge us down the horrid precipice.

Look into the pages of the Courier, and see if, instead of too little liberty in England, there is not a dangerous abuse of it yet permitted, since such wretched incendiaries are permitted to poison the minds of the vulgar by paragraphs like the following, which lately met my eyes in that newspaper: "The whole human race seems on the brink of general emancipation, which, by bestowing freedom and equality, we think must produce, in the end, universal happiness."

What is this but to excite the ignorant and dazzled populace to follow the example of France, to

destroy subordination, to trample on all the laws, to licence plunder, and to lift every man's hand against the life of his fellow-citizen ?.

Yet while these impudent sins against the safety of the state are committed under the protection of the much-abused freedom of the press, the French slaves, whose only liberty consists in the power of committing robbery and murder, under the banners of their tyrants, dare to reproach our constitution with enslaving its citizens, while the least disapproving hint concerning their sanguinary anarchy is punished with immediate death.

Saw you not, in last week's papers, the denunciation of a member of the convention for having moved for the permission of the freedom of the press in France ?—and shall we less jealously guard the blessings of our empire, than they the curses of theirs ?

For the would-be Marats and Robespierres, Barreres and Talliens, Messrs Muir and Palmer, Watt and Downie, convicted, by the clearest evidence, of conspiracies against the state, and condemned by their juries, I feel no compassion. As soon could I pity the condemned felon who had attempted the life of my dearest friend.

If the state had shewn, or shall shew, any weak lenity towards such plotters against its existence, it would, almost to a certainty, meet the reward

poor Louis met—the dogs of carnage would be slipped, and blood and destruction cover this yet happy land.

Of perseverance in the war you know my sentiments;—my ardent wish that government, though it is perhaps not possible to make terms and treaties of peace with that mad banditti, resistless through their numbers, would at length, and ere it be too late for the safety of this island, renounce a scheme which is become evidently impracticable; withdraw our fleets and armies from the European Continent, and turn its sole attention to the protection of England, to the preservation of our West India conquests, and to the detection and necessary punishment of those villains who would madly rise to distinction and transitory sway, upon the ruins of their country.

The stanzas, with which you have favoured me on Mr Knight's poem, have considerable beauty, both as to numbers and picture—but wise is the caution of not publishing them, for they have an evident tendency to promote that fatal system which leads to the destruction of all order in society. They exclaim,

"O! Liberty and Nature, kindred powers,
Shed on this favour'd isle your genial beams,
Arch our high groves, and weave our tangled bowers,
Pile our rude rocks, and wind our lucid streams."

This invocation ungratefully implies that they had not hitherto, that they do not now, shed them, though the gardens of England are as much more natural, free, and beautiful, than those of any other country, as its constitution diffuses more genuine liberty. The two last lines of that stanza, are extremely in Darwin's manner, and poetically beautiful.

Knight's system appears to me the Jacobinism of taste;—from its abusing that rational spirit of improvement, suggested by Milton in his description of the primeval garden; and realized and diffused by Brown; which, uniting the *utile* with the *dulce*, has rendered Britain the Eden of Europe. Mr Knight would have nature as well as man indulged in that uncurbed and wild luxuriance, which must soon render our landscape-island rank, weedy, damp, and unwholesome as the incultivate savannas of America.

The simile of the horse, in these harmonious and picturesque lines, is another poetic sophistry. If unrestrained vegetation had no greater tendency to promote mischief to the climate, and unrestrained man to society, than the unbridled horse has to injure himself and others, unbounded liberty might, as this poet, at all events, seems to desire it should, be safely granted to the whole triumvirate. But, though I shall always like to

see emancipated horses bound over our meadows, yet save me, good Heaven, from living in tangled forests, and amongst men who are unchecked by those guardian laws, which bind the various orders of society in one common interest. May the lawns I tread be smoothed by healthful industry, and the glades opened by the hand of picturesque taste, to admit the pure and salutary breath of heaven!—and may the people, amongst whom I live, be withheld by stronger repellants than their own virtue, from invading my property and shedding my blood!—And so much for politics and pleasure-grounds.

Amidst many other agreeable circumstances, for which I have been indebted to your friendship, I thank you for recommending High Lake to me as a marine residence. I like it extremely; and, though often indisposed, hope to receive benefit from its pure gales and placid waters. All my fear is an abated degree of saline strength in the billows, by the intermixture of fresh water from the rivers Dee and Mersey, incessantly stealing into the lake amidst the salt green streams of the ocean.

We have here a very pleasant society, to the amount of about thirty. The music at Liverpool allured a considerable part of it thither; amongst the rest my cousin T. White and his bright-eyed

friend. I had an arduous struggle with my inclinations on that occasion. Considerations of health, however, prevailed over every temptation to indulge myself in the highest luxury my senses can experience, and I remained quiet at High Lake.

T. White enchants the circle with his songs Some of the party have heard and mention yours with the highest-possible encomiums. Our society received a great addition to its pleasures by Mr Wigley's company during a week.

If you are still at B., present my best compliments to Mr Brereton. It is one of my regrets that I have so seldom the advantage and happiness of his conversation. Adieu!

LETTER II.

EDMUND WIGLEY, ESQ. M. P.

High Lake, Oct. 1, 1794.

THANK you for transmitting to me my packet of letters from Lichfield. You might well be surprised at the slovenly state in which they approached you. As to the temptation which you

boast of having resisted, believe me, if any of their contests were of much literary interest, I would return them for your perusal. They would not be worth to you the trouble of looking over in a period which drops no pick-tooth half-hours from its wings.

We miss you on the airy promontory, and on the silver sands. A certain sunny smile is wanted to re-illuminate our little circle, gloomed by melancholy shipwreck, and all its heart-affecting particulars. A ship sunk, close to the sand-island on the ocean side, yesterday morning at nine o'clock, overwhelmed by the heavy and stormy seas. Her seven mariners perished, besides the other passengers which probably she had on board. An American vessel, which put into this Lake a few hours after, and which was itself in great danger, saw her sink within gun-shot, without being able to afford the least assistance to the unhappy creatures, who, with the dire shrieks of despair, were clinging round her masts and shrouds. Boats have been going off to the wreck ever since, whose men return with sad narrations from hour to hour. Ascending the highest apartment of this hotel, we saw the dismal wreck distinctly through a telescope, with the several boatmen which had landed on the island, and were busied about it; and some of them bending over the dead bodies that

lay scattered on the sands. Three of them were found in a dreadfully lacerated condition, and brought into the Lake in a boat last night.

These are the shocking circumstances, which, to inlanders often counteract the exhilarating effect of coast-residence, even while they make us feel, with the most sensible comfort,

> "The grove's blest shelter on the stable shore,
> Where the tall pine-tree sings beneath the wind."

I have quoted those pretty lines, translated by a friend of mine from an idyllium of the Greek poet, Moschus, though there are neither groves nor pine-trees at High Lake. Imagination, however, easily substitutes a grove for a feather-bed—and for rattling windows, whistling trees.

Miss Remmington and my tuneful cousin desire to present to you very animated remembrances. I hope we may all pass a social evening together at Lichfield on the 16th. Meantime, and always, believe me, &c.

LETTER III.

Lord Bagot *.

Lichfield, Oct. 15, 1794.

Permit me this one more intrusion, that I may express my grateful sense of the kind manner in which you have accepted the little † local composition which I ventured to present to you.

> O! if the wise and good, with candid eyes,
> Survey my new-blown bubbles as they rise,
> If honour'd lips the wish'd applause bestow,
> Delight unblam'd my conscious heart may know;
> For this the bards, for this the sages toil,
> And waste in deep research the midnight oil;
> For this the painter wakes the living trace,
> For this the sculptor moulds the tardy grace;
> For this my muse resum'd her banish'd lays,
> And meets a priz'd reward in Bagot's praise.

I am much obliged by the friendly and just criticism of which I have availed myself, by altering the line your Lordship was so good to point out

* Of Blythfield, near Lichfield.

† Verses written at Hoyle Lake, and descriptive of that scene.—*S.*

to my scrutiny. I did not like it when it was written;—felt it was unhappy, but had not leisure to examine wherefore. The verses were, at the request of the company, begun only a few days before I left High Lake;—nor, for the purpose of accurate investigation, were either time or seclusion allowed me. I have changed the defective line, thus,

"While at thy voice," &c.

If your Lordship should favour them with a subsequent perusal, and if you think that slight change removes the objection, you will perhaps have the goodness to insert it with your pencil.

I find the word innoxious wants the double *n* in my copy, and that I have spelt the river Mersey wrong. These errors too certainly exist in that copy which Lord Bagot has accepted, with a graciousness peculiarly his own.—I have the honour to remain, my Lord, your Lordship's most obliged and obedient servant.

LETTER IV.

MISS SYKES.

Lichfield, Oct. 25, 1794.

FROM Mr and Mrs Worsley of Plat, whom I met on the coast, I learnt that dear Mrs Sykes and yourself had passed some weeks at Matlock, on your return into Yorkshire. This surprised me, as you both seemed bent upon an immediate journey home. The plan, however, seemed as wise, in point of health, as it was probably sudden. I rejoice that it was propitious to your excellent mother's more perfect recovery, nor less that you found Mr Sykes, on your coming home, looking cheerily abroad with painless vision. Warmly do I wish the continuance of that and every other blessing which can gladden the lightsome walls of Westella.

Yes, indeed, Mr Saville was delighted with his tour in Wales, and residence on the coast of the Bay of Cardigan. Our friends, the Roberts', new home is situate on an hill which looks into the Vale of Langollen, whose romantic beauties are, by universal testimony, matchless, I mean in Eng-

land. There he paused three days in his progress, and four on his return. His road to the coast lay through that valley, and along farther tracts of country, scarce inferior in mountainous grandeur and sylvan luxuriance. The scenery then glowed in the richness of the summer livery, and the Deva, of poetic celebration, gurgled shallow in its pebbly channels. When he came back, the preceding rains had swelled its waters into torrents. Cataracts descended from the rocks, and the prospects gained more in magnificence, than, from the advanced year, they had lost in beauty. Mr Saville's fine talents, pleasing manners, and visible goodness of heart, made him many friends amongst the hospitable families resident near Barmouth. Sir Robert Vaughan came to that place frequently, while he staid, with a train of agreeable guests, and invited him often to Hengwert, where he was always welcomed with cordial regard. Fond of music, that family were delighted with his transcendent songs, which, from superiority of energetic expression, throw all other singing into shade. Nor less friendly, nor less pleased with his talents and worth, were Mr and Mrs Fletcher of Gwinheglid, in English, Sunny Alders; where, at their request, he passed a few days on his journey back. The description was very glowing which he sent me of the singular

scenic graces of Gwinheglid. In despite of social and melodious exertions, trying enough to invalidism, I hope he is returned in considerably amended health.

And now for an history of myself, in which dear Miss Sykes avows so kind an interest.—My coast-residence was at Hoyle Lake, twelve miles below Park-Gate. The air of that grassy mound, on which the hotel stands, is remarkably pure, and seldom annoyed by showers. The surcharged clouds, without descending there, draw their dark trains towards the Flintshire mountains, that rise on the left from the opposite shores of the Dee. It is only the all-day rains that fall at High Lake, and but three of those wet days occurred during our stay. The farther local particulars of this newly-established marine residence the inclosed poem will place before you.

Our party was very pleasant. Being only one house at High Lake, we all lived together with the social cheerfulness of a large family. Lord Bagot's sister, Mrs Wingfield of Shrewsbury, I had, in my juvenile years, very slightly known. Last year, at Scarborough, we renewed our acquaintance. She and her amiable daughters formed an interesting part of our society at High Lake. They all expressed the most flattering pleasure in our meeting again. They arrived a few days after us,

and left the place on the same morning that we turned our faces towards Staffordshire. Several other Shropshire families were also there. The situation pleased us all, and the apartments are light and spacious as those of the hotels at Buxton; the provisions equally good.

Expressing my esteem for the public spirit of Sir John Stanley, in building upon this oceanic spot, the company prevailed upon me to write its description in verse, which they fancied would please him, and contribute to the rising celebrity of the scene. Whatever other merit the little poem may want, its descriptions are strictly appropriate. Standing on the edge of the cliffs, from which we descend to our bathing-machines, and, with our faces to the sea, we discern every object my verse describes. Miss Wingfield was so good to transcribe this poem thrice, in pity to the many claims upon my pen. Mrs Wingfield pressed me to send her brother, Lord Bagot, a copy. However warmly I may approve the existence of the aristocratic link in that chain of subordination, so necessary to the good of every country, I yet feel the extremest reluctance to push myself upon the notice of the great, and somewhat reluctantly consented to her proposal; but I have had no reason to repent my acquiescence. Lord Bagot has written to me twice on

the occasion, with the most gratifying praise of this rhyming trifle, and with even friendly cordiality, though personally unknown to him. After warmer commendations than I can, in any modesty, repeat, he taught me to believe him rather partial than flattering, by confessing that he thought one line obscure, and not strictly grammatical. I altered it instantly; and transmitting my alteration to him, he wrote again, to say that I had made it all he wished. Sir John Stanley has also acknowledged my tribute to himself and his place, in warm terms of approbation and pleasure; but I have had the mortification of seeing it printed in the Shrewsbury newspaper of October the 15th, in a form scarce less appalling to its hapless author than that of the murdered Banquo to Macbeth,

> "With twenty mortal blunders on its surface,
> The least a death to sense."

I am promised its re-insertion in a more correct state. But it will probably be copied from the first mangled edition into other papers, and its disgrace consequently spread. These are the miseries of authorism.

Well might you say you did not suspect me of having written an elegy on the murder of Robespierre.—So perish all who seek to rise to the

world's notice, by promoting the destruction of all that gives security to property and life!—But I should like to know what those say to this event, whom I have heard extol that villain, with his brother villains, who have perished, and who yet remain to perish, by the caprice of that mad multitude, which their pernicious efforts first disorganized. If Robespierre deserved his fate from the French, I should like to hear his late admirers confess the gross error of their esteem; and if they persist in deeming him, what he certainly was, a firm supporter of the system they justify, and even *extol*, what must be the state of that nation in which a man, who had long and strenuously exerted himself to promote what it affects to call its happiness, may one month be obeyed, adored, deified as the saviour of his country, and the next, demonized as its worst foe, and murdered with impunity?—The state of these times is perilous indeed. The infernal French, with more than Gothic barbarity, seem likely to overrun Europe, as, in past ages, it was overrun by the furious Goths; and, like them, to destroy all that is fair, virtuous, and happy in civilized nations. God defend the general weal against those who have blasphemed his name, defied his power, and violated every law human and divine!

But it is more than time to close this long letter. You know that lovely Miss Howard is going to marry Sir Robert Wilmot. It will not be January and May, but it will be May and October. I hope his talents, his acquirements, and his virtues, may recompense the sear and yellow leaves, when they shall entwine around her roses.

LETTER V.

MRS HAYLEY.

Lichfield, Nov. 1, 1794.

I REJOICE that you are pleased with your situation in the metropolis. May you always find London replete with interest and amusement! It concerns me, however, to perceive that regret has mingled with its pleasures; especially that this regret should have arisen from an event which must throw a long, perhaps an eternal gloom over the life of your beloved friend Mrs Pigot.

It diverts me that Mr Long should call your present life a rural one; yet, that it may be of

that complexion, I can easily imagine, from your vicinity to Hyde-Park, and the possibility, to a meditative mind, of being not disagreeably alone when surrounded by numbers.

You certainly know that I am dull at impromptus, where the subject demands a lively epigrammatic kind of verse; that, if I have a tolerable share of imagination, I have but little of wit. Mr Clarke's desire to possess my name, written by my own hand, is a flattering request, and the heart-affecting tribute to my, alas! perhaps imaginary merits, which his brother has publickly paid in his ingenious Tour through England and Wales, inspired the resolve to endeavour at something which should be a little less dull than compliance merely literal. You expressed an inclination that I might make an attempt of this sort; but see how the execution reproaches your Egyptian injunction, that called for brick where straw was not.—

Our self-inscrib'd name, as the scroll were a treasure,
When strangers request in their fanciful pleasure,
It flatters the hope that our bark may be scudding
From this corporal climate of beef and of pudding,
To the high shrine of fame, where posterity know men,
And we deem the request a right prosp'rous omen;
But gales inauspicious oft blow from that region,
And, for one that attains it, they blow back a legion.

In despite of Clarke's wish, and his brother's kind record,
Whose rays from that shrine my pale streamers have chequer'd,
Its winds will too probably soon blow from leeward,
And sink in oblivion's cold waves Anna Seward.

I present to you two little impromptus in a style better calculated to my poetic meridian. On the evening of my late excursion, I pointed out to Mr White a passage in Richard III., of much poetic grandeur, though, " with most admired stupidity," expunged from the play, as it is altered for the stage. Queen Margaret, surrounded by her conquerors of the York line, says to Gloucester,

" Those who stand high have many blasts to shake them."

He replies,

" That may be true, but I was born so high!—
Our eyrie buildeth in the cedar's top,
And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun."

Mr White and I agreed, that, with all Dr Darwin's consummate skill in fabricating the splendidly ornamented and elaborate species of verse, he has yet too little taste for simple poetic greatness, generally most sublime when least adorned, to feel the transcendent poetic excellence of this metaphoric allusion, whose simple expressions

leave the effect to be produced solely by the grandeur of the idea. I observed to him, that if Darwin had chosen to describe an eagle's nest, he would, perhaps, do it somehow thus—

> Build thy strong eyrie, plumy son of light,
> Poiz'd on the cedar top's majestic height;
> Aloft in air the quivering cradle plays,
> Scorns the loud storm, and mocks the solar rays.

That if Pope had chosen to describe the same object, it would probably have been in these kind of numbers—

> Thus, on the cedar top, the eagle builds
> His dancing eyrie in etherial fields;
> It scorns the winter's wind, and beating rain,
> And summer suns shoot vertical in vain.

I send this packet by your favourite Mr Thomas Panting, who, as you are conscious, knows how to converse with sprightly wit and lettered elegance. You and he amused each other, I remember, with the idea of the C——r Lawyer's fat wife, who came to Parkgate to improve her understanding.

You call on Romney sometimes. Assure him of my frequent, my grateful remembrances. The dear bard forsakes me utterly. Newer friends have more charms for him, but none can have a sincerer regard.

What is become of good Dr Warner?—Has he never emerged from the chaos in France?—I inquire of everybody—nobody tells me. I wish you may be an abler intelligencer on a theme so interesting. Adieu.

LETTER VI.

EDMUND WIGLEY, ESQ. M. P.

Lichfield, Dec. 5, 1794.

YES, truly, the acquittal of Hardy and Tooke affords fresh and irrefragable proof how totally unfounded their and their fellow-wretches' ungrateful clamours against the powers of the English constitution to protect the liberties and safety of Englishmen. That those dark conspirators have escaped the doom they had justly incurred, does but deepen the blackness of their guilt, and disgrace their jurors, who have ill-performed their guardian trust and duty to protect their king and country against their dangerous foes; for neither was it in the * Belial-eloquence of Mr Erskine,

* See description of the oratoric powers of Belial, P. L. 2d Book, verse 107.

nor in the irresolute manner of the Chief Justice's charge in Tooke's trial, with its absurd conclusion, to conceal from the judgment of every sincere well-wisher to his country and its king, that Hardy and Tooke evidently designed and plotted, with daring energy, the overthrow of the government, which inevitably involved the deposition, and, by certain experienced consequence, the death of the king.

If the magnitude of crimes is, as it ought to be, measured by the degree and extent of the mischiefs they produce, the direct assassin of a king less deserves the just vengeance of the violated laws, than those who attempt to destroy that fair fabric of public peace, protection, and security, more valuable, a thousand fold, than the life of any monarch; because, truly, it possesses not, in all its parts, that absolute perfection which no human system can attain, and be practicable, unless human nature was in itself less frail.

If a king is murdered, the guilt of destroying him, however dreadful, is yet less dreadful in its consequence than the overthrow of such a government as ours. Every king has a successor, who may not be a less desirable first link of the social chain than himself; and if he should, the laws will protect his subjects from every mischief that might otherwise result from his dege-

neracy.—But what is the successor to a destroyed government?—We have seen it;—even blood-stained anarchy, with all her legion of public miseries. To establish that successor in England, to a constitution which secures the life, freedom, and property of every Englishman, Tooke and his demoniac coadjutors have conspired and laboured. There is the clearest proof of it; and since the greater crime drew the less in its train, viz. the death of the king, these acquitting verdicts smell strong of participation, at least by wishes, in the guilt they have screened. O! it is ill and ominous for England,

> ——————"When our edicts,
> Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,
> And liberty plucks justice by the nose."

Adieu! dear Sir.—Far be from you individually every real evil, every inauspicious omen!

LETTER VII.

Mrs F. Evans, of Nottingham.

Lichfield, Dec. 11, 1794.

To leave unacknowledged a letter so friendly and obliging, from a charming woman, whom I esteem as much as I like, would weigh on my spirit almost like an unexpiated sin. That it has not been earlier acknowledged, was owing to the disproportion of my leisure to the claims upon it, and to the frequently incapacitating power of bodily pain.

I am gratified by your warm approbation of my little poem on Hoyle Lake. Sir John Stanley's letter to me, on receiving it, was not less flattering; yet I perceived that he politely hinted at a defect, in its silence concerning the circumstance of historic distinction, which belong to those downs: William III. having encamped his armies upon them, and taken shipping from thence on his victorious expedition to Ireland. Frequently as we talked of that circumstance, while I resided at Hoyle Lake, it was scarcely in the haste with which that composition had been fabricat-

ed, in the interrupting duties of that place, or in its social engrossments, to excuse the omission of a fact so honourable to the scene which my verses attempt to celebrate. On reading Sir John's letter, I felt this strongly, but was unwell—out of spirits; and when we believe a thing completed, almost passed away from our own recollection, and perhaps wholly so from that of others, we hate to resume it. Feeling, however, that the omission ought to be supplied, the other day I took up my sluggish pen, and, in five minutes, wondered at my reluctance to do what was so easily and so speedily done. The two additional stanzas come in after the eighteenth naturally; and, I flatter myself, without bearing any marks of their engrafture upon the original stock. I inclose them.

It is several days since I conversed with your platonic adorer. With all his good taste in literature and ladies, he has some unaccountabilities—I was going to have said eccentricities; but the self-coined word, odd as it sounds, expresses my meaning better. One of these fancies is the perpetual scampering off from a very agreeable and comfortable home into the neighbouring villages, and there indolently wasting day after day with beings of little congeniality to himself.

Last night was our Cecilian anniversary. Lich-

field concerts used to be charming; but since Mr Saville's impaired and uncertain health has induced his declining, as much as possible, to sing in public; and since his syren daughter has wholly renounced it, great indeed is the falling off. Those who remember well their *golden* vocalities sigh over their present comparatively *leaden* ones. Mr S. intended singing one song last night, but found himself at the time too much indisposed to attempt it, for it was an Italian opera song, of very animated exertion, in which Armida reproaches Rinaldo in strains of blended indignation, love, and despair. One of the present candidates for the choral stall in our cathedral, vacant by the death of poor young Spray, a Mr Claburn of Cambridge, sung a lovely song of Handel's, with elegance and expression; and Birch, with his noble bass tones, gave us the sublime strain of that great master—"He layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters." Spray, whose voice is so fine in church-music, does not shine in concert-singing; besides, his song was *silly*, and ill adapted to his voice, though the air wanted not beauty. The audience were by no means sparing in their applause; but the breaking of an old bench which supported the music-books, letting them all drop in the midst of a concerto, was honoured with vollies of manual thun-

der—a most invalidating peal of plaudits to the previously applauded singers.

Mr Saville and Mrs Smith often talk with me of you, while Henry, listening to some village clock, lolls in an elbow-chair, and gilds his day-dreams with your image.

LETTER VIII.

Mrs Jackson, of Turville Court, Oxfordshire.

Lichfield, Jan. 21, 1794.

"Remember March, the Ides of March remember!"—They will give the dear Whalleys to my wishes, and I trust they will give me you, who are not less beloved. I entreat you to let them find you here. Propitious to my wishes be your reply! Life wastes—time flies—and the genius of Britain droops—Ah! who knows how long we may, any of us, have an home in which to receive each other? The rashness of our rulers, in pursuing this hopeless war, amidst the penury, weakness, treachery, and desertion of our allies, seems to co-operate with the machinations of sedition, to involve us in miseries, dreadful as those which

overwhelmed France; exchanging the solid blessings of her commerce, the splendid irradiations of her literature and arts, the respect and admiration of the surrounding nations,

> " And all the gentler morals, such as play
> Thro' life's so cultur'd walks, and charm our way,"

for the devastating conquests of desperate valour; lavish of life, through the extreme of its wretchedness;—conquests, ruinous to others, and probably useless to that wretched country which obtains them.

It seems to me, that common sense is equally indignant of the shallow, reasonless oratory, which is so perpetually shifting its ground, to defend this now totally unmotived war;—and of the self-evident falsehoods, asserted by Fox, Sheridan, and Erskine, amidst their triumph on the subject of the acquitted traitors, and their dishonest clamours for a removal of the eminently necessary restraints upon the treasons to our constitution. Serjeant Adair and Mr Wilberforce are the only men, one on the H. Corpus act, the other on the war, who appear to have spoken, independent of selfish short-sighted ambition and party connections, the dictates of true patriotism, suited to the ominous complexion of the times.

Amongst the countless sacrifices, fallen in this originally just, and once well-promising, though, for the last two years, unwise and rash war, is Lieutenant-Colonel Buller:—young, amiable, and brave. I have been solicited, by some of his connections, to write his elegy;—so have I also that of many others, on whose account I received similar applications;—and to which I reluctantly returned similar replies; namely, that having already published two military elegies, I cannot retread a path where it is almost impossible to find one non-descript flower, with which to strew the tomb of those gallant unfortunate men, who have perished in defence of the claims of their country. Were I to attempt compliance with requests of this sort, my muse must e'en turn undertaker; and I had better put up a board over my door, "poetic shrouds to be let, and ideas for military funerals furnished in the cheapest and readiest manner."—This dreadful war would give me business in plenty. I am pleased to see you familiar with the striking, though often odd passages in the "melancholy and angry Night Thoughts," as Johnson finely styles them;—where wit perpetually darts through the gloom of solemn and mournful reflections of moral and religious warnings; like the coruscations of lightning in a turbid and dark-

ened atmosphere. Your quotation * from their pages forms a striking axiom, just as its illustration is singular, and perhaps vulgar, though not unhappy; expressive of the moulding damp that often steals upon ideas, which are suffered to revolve in the mind without being communicated.

Young's greatest literary fault, though not existing in the sentence you cited, is the not knowing where to stop;—but, after having uttered a sublime conception, ringing changes upon it, till its impressive force sinks, encumbered and weakened, amidst quibbling pleonasm, and the bathos of vulgar and redundant allusion. I sometimes long to lop and compress the Night Thoughts. If that could be judiciously done, a work might remain of unexcelled sublimity and poetic beauty in the sombre style; for the genius of their author was great and original. Judgment was his grand desideratum.

Adieu! I trust you will hear the winds of our approaching equinox sing around my large old dwelling. The present interval is very severe:

> "But fancy, mocking winter's might,
> With gentler gales, and friendship's light,
> Already decks the tardy spring."

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* "Thoughts shut up want air
And spoil, like bales unopen'd to the sun."—*N. Thoughts.*

LETTER IX.

DAVID SAMWELL, ESQ.

Lichfield March 17, 1795.

IT flatters me that you like my little poem on Hoyle Lake. I have really not exaggerated the mild *agrémens* of the scene. The handsome hotel, built since you saw it, the little appendant white cottages, scattered around, to supply it with milk, butter, &c. diffuse an air of cheerful and social comforts, where you saw only barren and lonely downs. The rich and varied scenery on the Flintshire coast, rising from the waters of the Dee, form, when the azure mirror is full, a soft and beautiful marine landscape, recompensing the absence of rocky grandeur, and the terrific graces of oceanic sublimity.

Your account of the Shakespearean discovery is very interesting—but my faith is not implicit. The absence of the indecent passages in the copy of Lear, looks suspicious. Obscene wit occurs so often in his other plays, and in Lear it is of such biting shrewdness, that, however responsible

in inclination the performers might be to foist in passages of that nature, the infinite satiric wit of those which are scattered through that play, proclaim their genuine descent, " trumpet-tongued."

The internal evidence which the Vortigern must supply, either for or against the originality of these productions, will, in time, by the accumulating suffrages of those who are competent to judge and decide upon poetic claims, either sink them in oblivion, or gather them to the treasures left us by that great master.

If the business should be surreptitious, he is a bold man who attempts to shoot in the strong bow of our own Ulysses. I believe there is one, and only one, existing, who has the power of exciting doubt, if not faith, in the discriminating, by an effort so arduous. That man is Jephson. His bold and figurative style in Narbon, and in the Law of Lombardy, resembles Shakespeare extremely;—not servilely, but with freedom, strength, and happiness. The little notice which has been taken of those plays, compared with their true claims to distinction, convince me that if Shakespeare had lived and written in these days, his fame and himself had not been contemporaries.

With your censure of a line in that fine ode of

Gray's, on the installation of the Duke of Grafton at Cambridge, I do not quite accord. In this the concluding stanza

> " Through the wild waves, as they roar,
> With watchful eye, and dauntless mien,
> Thy steady course of honour keep;
> Nor fear the rocks nor dread the shore,
> The star of Brunswick smile serene,
> And gilds the horrors of the deep."

You say that, without an effort of memory, you never could recollect the second line of that stanza, and have at length discovered that it is the author's fault, being a superfluous line, and the sense of the passage complete without it. I confess the sense of the passage complete without that parenthetic line, but it appears to me of vital essentiality to the picture. Excluding it, there remains, it is true, a clear allusion to an able mariner combating maritime dangers, but no distinct image. In that second line, the magic of the poetic wand instantly transforms the minister of state into the skilful and intrepid naval commander, standing firm on the deck, and eluding, " with watchful eye, and dauntless mien," the fury of the tempest;—while it changes our monarch into the polar-star, discovering the rocks, and shewing a way in the sea, and a path in the

mighty waters. There is happy, and I think Horatian spirit, in your ode* written on the northern cruise. The address to the moon is beautiful, and particularly in the manner of Horace.

Mischiefs, many and various, descend upon our Island. A relentless winter, with its long frosts, and resistless floods, has augmented the miseries of a rash and ill-managed war, and almost destroyed the verisimilitude of one feature in Johnson's beautiful picture of an happy country, the blessings of which seem to transcend the faith of his Greenlander: "We live not, my fair, in those fabled countries which lying strangers so wantonly describe; where the whole year is divided into short days and nights; where its inhabitants may pass from one extremity of the land to another, through ways inclosed with trees, and over walls raised upon the inland waters."

Our young princess comes to us at an inauspicious period. Since her royal lover so long declined the hymeneal chain, he had better have waited till the lilies and the olives of peace might enwreath it. O! that our rulers would endeavour to procure them for the insignia of British sway, rather than those ensanguined laurels which, now

* See Gentleman's Magazine for February 1795.

so evidently placed beyond its reach, stamp the continuation of this desperate struggle to obtain them, with very criminal rashness, and with folly that amounts to infatuation. It is time, it has long been time, to take care of our existence as an independent nation. As for the enslaving, the tyrannous, the murderous, the blasphemous anarchists—Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it.

How stood your health the seldom-paralleled severity of the last winter?—the long frost and its inundating dissolution?

> "What art thou, frost? and whence are thy keen stores
> Derived, thou secret, all-invading power,
> Which e'en th' illusive fluid cannot fly?"

Do you not admire the charming poet who asks that question in his Seasons?—Thomson! great painter of Nature, thou art of all hours.

Dropping eyelids reproach my pen for having invaded the hours of rest. It stands corrected, and bids you farewell!

LETTER X.

Mrs Powys.

Lichfield, April 1, 1795.

My two months' silence to the treasures of your last packet, has extended itself in no retallative spirit. Mrs Mompessan, the friend of my youth, preceded its arrival a few days, and remained my guest till last Saturday. Part of the time she was dangerously ill; and before and after her recovery, our frequent engagements engrossed my leisure; and what little I could command, often sunk in the indolent languor produced by local pain and apprehension of its consequences.

The 13th of March brought Mr and Mrs Whalley to me, whose dear society I have also very recently lost. One of the heaviest afflictions that can wring the feeling bosom, after having tormented them near two years with terror of its descent, became, some four months since, complete: an affliction, the corrosive bitterness of which must inevitably mingle with all of comfort which they may hereafter taste, till human evil,

neither by immediate pressure, nor cruel recollection, can annoy them more. Mr W.'s lovely, accomplished, and celebrated neice, Miss Sage that was, Mrs Mullins that is, Miss Sage that will again be, was, in her infancy, recommended to his care by the maternal tenderness of a beloved sister, expiring in the bloom of life. This sacred and precious trust, Mr and Mrs Whalley executed with the most sedulous attention and fondest indulgence. She grew, she bloomed;—the pride, the delight of their hearts. Genius and wit aided, by rapidly acquired endowments, the fascinations of beauty.—The creations of the pencil glow beneath her fingers. Her skill, taste, and invention on the harpsicord is scarce inferior to that of the first masters; and to a voice of exquisite tone, power, compass, and inflexion, she adds the touching graces of harmonic expression, in a degree of excellence that approaches to enchantment. She was abroad with her aunt and uncle Whalley, in the year 1786, and, mistress of French and Italian, she conversed, sung,—she played, she danced, the day-star of our island;—so that nothing was more talked of in the then happy French cities than the charming English-woman.

Three years since, Mr and Mrs W. and her father had the happiness of seeing her married to

Mr Mullins, a gentleman of graceful person, splendid fortune, and generous virtues, the impassioned choice of her avowed affections.

After a twelvemonth's ardent attention to him, repaid on his part by the most devoted indulgence, she grew cold, and apparently oppressed by every instance of his regard, and charmed by the admiration of other men. She racked his heart with jealousy, and received his expostulations with scorn; grieved and alarmed from time to time, by her levities, those tender friends who had been the guardians of her youth; and at last, a few months since, eloped with Captain Tothe of the guards, with whom she now lives in total disgrace, reckless of having blasted her constellation of talents—reckless of this dire apostacy from gratitude, from love, from honour, and from duty.

Never will my friends cease to grieve over this fallen star, that was once and long the light of their existence. Though, at times, the native energy of Mr Whalley's spirit pervaded, in social intercourse, the gloom of this woe, yet, whenever he was either not speaking himself, or not particularly addressed by others, I saw the corroding recollection rising darkly to his fixing eye, and sitting on his relaxing lips. Both their healths have been much impaired by this shock. You who have so

poignantly experienced guardian affection, and guardian solicitude, will know how to feel for Mr and Mrs W., and to commiserate their regrets.

I thank you for the beautifully imagined fable, Rivuletta, which you tell me was written at twelve years old, by Honora Edgeworth, that early blighted blossom from the fair scion I lov ed so fondly. The word *written* implies that it was wholly her own. At the close of the transcript you say—"Extract from Lavater." Now, whether those words imply that it was translated from that author, in whom I do not recollect any fable, nor indeed have I ever heard that he composed any; —or whether you refer to some extract from that writer which you meant to add, and omitted, I know not. But, from being a *translation*, if this composition comes more within the bounds of credibility from the pen of an infant, enough of ingenuity results from the propriety and elegance of the language, to convince us that a mind of no common strength was extinguished in the death of that beauteous girl. Her mother had rapidity of perception, delicacy of taste, and strength and solidity of judgment, which I have not, in either sex, often seen equalled, and never excelled; but the powers of a creative imagination, which constitute the faculty termed genius, I am not sure that she

ever possessed.—Such powers I mean as must have been her daughter's in a very rare degree indeed, if she invented, at twelve years old, that fable, as well as clothed it in language whose graceful purity may vie with the style of our best writers, matured by time and knowledge.

O! yes, if it is indeed true what you have been told of recent literary duplicity in Mr H——'s conduct*, concerning his Life of Milton, I must with you acknowledge and mourn its unworthiness. Most inconsistent is such finesse with the candour and generosity of which his conversation and manners, together with many a recollected instance of liberal, ingenuous, and noble exertion bear the fairest testimony. I could not have credited it, but for another instance of departure from that truth, and day-light of feeling and action, which his general conduct evinces. It respects his admirable comedy in rhyme, the Mausoleum. There the singular character of Johnson is held up in satiric traits of such striking resemblance to him, and to him only, with many known stories and circumstances of his odd ac-

* That he had published two editions of that work; one addressed to the king, and free from the leaven of democratic principles—the other for his friends, with notes strongly tinctured with their pernicious infatuation.—S.

tions alluded to;—his famous, I am inclined to say infamous, Lives of the Poets, directly glanced at, that there is no possibility of mistaking Mr H.'s design;—a design eminently justifiable in itself;—a punishment which poetic genius had every right to inflict on the envious calumniator of its great predecessors:—but what shall we say to Mr H.'s coward assertion, in the preface to those comedies, that the character of Ramble was not designed for Johnson, but to satirize his imitators? This was the first shock which my esteem and perfect confidence in the manly integrity of Mr H.'s mind sustained.

I mentioned that shock to himself, and perhaps my frankness was one cause of that diminished regard for me which his epistolary neglect demonstrates.

It is yet in vain that I have been longing to read this Life of Milton. Perhaps I shall never be enabled to see that secret edition which shrinks in transient darkness from regal displeasure; but its existence, compared with that addressed to the king, and from whence the democratic principles have been weeded, forms a twin instance of duplicity to the disavowal of Johnson's portrait.

Mr H.'s want of judgment in both these literary manœuvres is as astonishing as their disingenuousness is lamentable;—that he should, in one

instance, prefer the loss of public confidence in his sincerity, to the danger of irritating Johnson, who was living when the Mausoleum was first published, and even when he could not rationally hope to deceive him by the disavowal;—and now that he should thus prove himself at once the flatterer and the foe of royalty!

You inquire after my residence at High Lake. I found it immediately salutary to my general health, which yet retains the advantages of coast-air and immersion; yet I wish I had not ventured on sea-bathing, bringing back, as I too surely believe it did, the miserable sensations of pain and irritation in the left breast, which originated in the hurt I got last spring;—sensations which I would gladly exchange for every other disorder that has annoyed my existence. I am glad to find that no material injury to your health was produced by the vexations your infamous tenant gave you, combined with the discomforts of our long inexorable winter. Those who want that prime blessing health, my dear Mrs Powys, feel inclined to wonder that any one, possessing it, can fail to be happy; forgetting how often, in their own experience, vexatious contingencies, and laceration of the affections, had frustrated its power to bless.

You have heard me laugh at the power those

two pleasant young men, my cousin Whites, possessed of walking through the fires of love with unsinged skins;—at length, however, the asbestos shirt of the youngest brother has failed him;—he will shortly be married to his old acquaintance, Miss Remmington, who was with me at High Lake last autumn, and much and deservedly admired there;—so he has lost the title I gave him—he is little Mesech no more;- but plump Henry will be Shadrach still; his asbestos is tough, and Cupid may heat the furnace of beauty seven-times hot in vain. Adieu.

LETTER XI.

MRS JACKSON, of Turville Court.

Lichfield, April 10, 1795.

I HOPE that friend is arrived in England ere this time, whose announced return to her native country deprived our late social party of the great addition it would have received by your presence.—I hope Mrs Parkhurst is now cheering herself in your smiles, and losing, in their recompensing influence, the memory of past inquietudes.

I wrote to you while Mr and Mrs W. were with me. The former had not then entered upon that fatal subject of regrets, which must be eternal. It was avoided by me at Mrs W.'s request, and against my own judgment. "Give sorrow words," is a precept of that great poet's who looked into the human heart, and saw what was best for its feelings. The next day Mr W. slid into the theme; which, perpetually intruding on his recollection, must be softened by the diffusion of communication, when it is made to the ear of sympathizing friendship. The ice once broke, we talked upon the subject whenever we were alone, or a trio with Mrs Whalley. O! that the beams of such an earth-treading star should be irrevocably quenched in infamy so total, so extreme!—that hearts, such as our friends, should be ordained to feel one of those few sorrows, which the lenient power of time itself can but little assuage.

Mr and Mrs W—, and Mrs Mompessan, liked each other much. They excused the odd excess of her contempt for externals; and while she wondered and shook her head over the number of their menial retinue, her perception of their talents and worth prevented her from censuring it.

I long to see your comedy—but if previous publication must be theatric exclusion, should be sorry to see it in print till it has adorned the

stage;—for I trust it possesses the power to adorn it—though Mr Hayley's and Miss Burney's defeat almost persuade us, that eminently fine talents are not inevitably competent to the excellence of dramatic composition. They, however, trode Melpomene's path—where fastidious modern taste, that, like a pettish child, knows not what would please it, demands the cold regularity of the French tragedy; while recollection, impressed with the wild and daring graces of Shakespeare, teaches it to yawn over the tedious declamation and dull regularity, with which yet it cannot be persuaded to dispense, and which can only be banished by that eventful violation of the unities, as to time and place, not permitted in our day.

Thalia's track is not so arduous, and my dear Mrs Jackson has talents that "thaw cold fear;" while the assured confidence of great performers, who have read her play, dissipate apprehension, even were the powers of the author less responsible.

Some of Cowley's poetry enchants me not less than yourself;—but in general, I am soon weary of treading the intricate mazes of his wit. His ode, entitled the Complaint, on the place at court promised to him being presented to another, is peculiarly my favourite. It has sublime imagery and beautiful allusion, with great simplicity of style, and its tender irony upon his own pursuits

affects one strangely. Mrs Brooke's sweet novel, the Excursion, has the same uncommon vein, as to irony I mean; where the credulity which excites our pitying smiles nothing diminishes our love and respect for the character that exhibits it.

Johnson, whose decision is, on the whole, not unfavourable to Cowley, speaks with scorn of that ode; but it was his custom, even where he spoke favourably in the aggregate, to reprobate the best work of the poet he is reviewing—as if unwilling that the reader should estimate him by that just test, viz. his most beautiful composition. Thus, while he commends Lord Lyttleton, he expresses scorn of the poem his fame must live by, his Monody. And it is thus he affects to despise those lovely little tales of Prior's, so highly original, so enchanting to the fancy. It is true, nothing can be more tiresome than a poet's serious allusion to Venus, Minerva, and the rest of the Pagan personages, as companions for his mistress;—but their humorous, playful, gallant, happy intermixture by Prior, with common-life circumstances, in honour of his Chloe, is one of that writer's most brilliant claims to poetic distinction. Do you not think so?

How sterile is vegetation after this long and pitiless winter!

——————" Violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
That come before the swallow dares, did shrink
Within their stiffen'd cradles, and refus'd
The winds of March their beauty."

LETTER XII.

Wm. Seward, Esq.*

Lichfield, May 17, 1795.

I ought more immediately to have thanked you for your obliging present of the Anecdotes † of distinguished Persons; but I am not in health, and you know the languid inexertion which the absence of that prime blessing creates.

Several of these anecdotes are curious and amusing as to matter, though defective in that grace of style, that vivacity and happiness of manner in

* A gentleman often mentioned in the Memorabilia of Johnson's conversation, as one of his frequent associates—no relation of the writer of these letters, though an old acquaintance.—*S.*

† At that *time*, the *author* had no suspicion that those anecdotes were Mr Seward's, since he had disingenuously told her they were written by a friend of his.—S.

narration, which gives interest to trivial communications, while it throws added lustre upon those which are in themselves striking and important.

Dr Johnson, whose sophistry in criticism has been fatal to the general poetic taste of this period, elevated the style of prose composition much above the water-gruel mark. His splendid example demonstrates, that efflorescence and strength of language united, are necessary to form the perfection of writing in prose as well as in verse; and the brilliant diction of Gibbon and Berrington, equally proves the dull mistake of supposing a plain unornamented style necessary, even to history itself.

Johnson's Tour to the Hebrides shows us the possibility of giving, by the graces of language, an exquisite charm to many observations and descriptions, which, without those verbal graces, would disgust by their want of essential importance. If he had plainly told us, that the channels of the rivers and of the brooks in the Highlands were much wider than the streams that occupied them at the season he travelled through those tracks;—that such disproportionate breadth of channel was occasioned by the frequent and sudden floods;—and that such depth and rapidity after rain, combined with their general shallowness to prevent their containing fish: we should certainly have

thought the information dully unimportant, and have probably exclaimed—"Pshaw! who knows not that the generally shallow streams of mountainous countries, often deep by flood, must, in dry seasons, have larger beds than they fill, and cannot possibly sustain fish?" But who, that is not insensible to the magic of fine style, can read the information without delight, as he thus imparts it?

"We passed many rivers and rivulets which commonly ran, with a clear shallow stream, over an hard pebbly bottom. These channels, which seem so much wider than the water they convey would naturally require, are formed by the violence of wintry floods, produced by the accumulation of innumerable streams that fall from the hills, and bursting away, with resistless impetuosity, make themselves a passage proportioned to their mass.

"Such capricious and temporary waters cannot be expected to produce fish. The rapidity of the wintry deluge sweeps them away, and the scantiness of the summer stream would hardly sustain them above the ground. This is the reason why, in fording the northern rivers, no fishes are seen, as in England, wandering in the water."

By the picturesque power of the numerous epithets, in the first sentence, we are placed on the brink of those currents, while they are hurrying

through their broad and stony channel, and we seem to stand amidst the wild scenes through which they flow. In the second, the image of the more vital English rivers and brooks is brought distinctly to the eye, by that fine poetic expression, "wandering in the water."

The compiler of the anecdotes you sent me, has admitted several to which scarcely the utmost elegance of traditionary detail could have given interest; such as the theft of Sydenham's tankard of small beer, with the sprig of rosemary in it. I wonder this compiler was not afraid that Iago's distich should be applied to himself:

> "He was a wight, if such a wight there were,
> To suckle fools, and chronicle small-beer."

He has given us other anecdotes which are trite and universally known. Of Madame le Valiere, he has told us nothing but what may be found in every history of the court of Louis the XIV., with which all the world is familiar.

That strange incredible tale of the two-bodied monster that lived twenty-seven years, and attained excellence in music, disgraces Buchanan, from whose authority it is quoted, whether received as a possible fact, or despised as a falsehood. If that writer really saw, and knew all that is here

related of that prodigy, it was stupid in the extreme not to have said a great deal more on the subject;—not to have examined, and clearly explained, whether the creature had absolutely two souls as well as two bodies—whether each could converse, and separately impart their different ideas to others. By saying that they often disputed about their food, it should seem that there were two souls in this monster;—but upon a subject so extraordinary, Buchanan owed it to himself as a philosopher, to investigate, and to the public as an historian, to impart.

I do not like the servile adulation to the fame of Johnson as a critic on *poetry*, which is so perpetually introduced in this work. It becomes no lover of literature, since, to the memory of the shining poetic lights of Great Britain, it is that species of ingratitude of which Lear so forcibly expresses his feeling, when he exclaims to his second daughter, "O Regan! wilt thou take her by the hand?"—Least of all does such indiscriminate homage become a Scotish gentleman—and such, you told me at Buxton, was the compiler of these anecdotes. I am obliged to him for his complimentary mention of me, when he names my father as rector of Eyam.

Yet you must not suppose that I mean to deny there being a great deal of just and very fine cri-

ticism in Johnson's lives of the Poets;—but since there is so much that is false, absurd, and injurious, it must disgrace the understanding and sensibility of every person, who bestows upon that work unqualified praise.

Few of your old acquaintance are left in Lichfield; but Mr Saville and his daughter are still the living memorials of pleasanter days. They and my cousins, White, commission me with compliments. The younger Mr White stands on the matrimonial brink, and with no hesitating foot;—every thing is determined. His choice, Miss Remmington, "of the dark-brown eyes;" I know not if you remember her.

Better health, has, I trust been yours, than has fallen to my lot, since I had the pleasure of meeting you at Buxton two years ago, and the honour of being taken for your sister, from a supposed personal resemblance.—Adieu!

LETTER XIII.

MISS WINGFIELD, of the Hall, Shrewsbury.

Lichfield, May 21, 1795.

IT is at length given me to answer my loved Miss Wingfield's interesting letter. Soothing and thrice-welcome was its kindness to a poor invalid, whose hours are often rendered uneasy by pain, and whose spirits are scarcely less frequently oppressed by the gloom of apprehension.

Sorry am I for the regret which the loss of so amiable a being as you describe Miss Mary Sneyd to have been, must inspire in the hearts of those to whom she was near and dear. For herself, there is, as you justly observe, little cause to lament; so they, at least, must be inclined to think, whose heart pines with any habitual sorrow, either from the ingratitude of those it has loved, from a galling dependence on contumelious pride, or over whom any heavy affliction or dire disease impends.—So gentle and almost painless a dismission from mortal life, exposed as it is to so many calamities, cannot to them appear a misfortune. How striking is Milton's enumeration

of the corporal evils to which we are all exposed—against whose assailment the amplest wealth has no protection—the proudest elevation of rank no shield!

" The ghastly spasm, and racking torture;—qualms
Of heart-sick agony;—all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies,—fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone, and ulcer;—cholic pangs;
Demoniac phrenzy;—moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness;—pining atrophy;
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence;
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums;
While o'er the sick triumphant Death his dart
Shakes; but delays to strike, though oft invok'd
With prayers, as the chief good and final hope.
" These, by rare lots, escaping, thou may'st live
To life's last verge; but then thou must out-live
Thy youth, thy strength, thy beauty, which shall change
To wither'd, weak, and grey. Thy senses then
Will lose all zest, and for the air of youth,
Hopeful and cheerful in thy blood will reign
A melancholy damp of cold and dry,
To weigh thy spirits down, and last consume
The balm of life."

But why do I transmit these melancholy images to my young friends? Dear Mrs Wingfield will think of me with chiding thoughts, for thus placing them before the mental eye of her Mary, naturally, perhaps, too prone to dwell on mournful objects. Alas! this is not the brighter hour in

which, when I last hastily addressed you, I hoped to have resumed my pen, and for which I have waited in vain.

My imagination, which loves to meet the terrible graces when they are led by an able hand, warmly thanks you for their striking appearance in your last letter, where you describe the devastations at Shrewsbury of last winter's almost universal deluge. Well do I remember Mrs M. Powys's account of the formidable, though less dreadful flood of the year 1770—the swell of the Severn into the abbey parlours, "in the dead vast, and middle of the night." With that lively vein, which often flows from her pen, even amid distressing circumstances, she thus closes her picture:—"At this instant, the Venus de Medicis in our garden stands up to her chin in water, and we were all imprisoned in the upper apartments, thinking about Noah's ark."

The year 1770! the last in which Honora Sneyd lived beneath this roof, and consequently the most precious to my remembrance of all my happier periods—yes, in that very flood had she been overwhelmed, but for the interest her engaging appearance made in the kind hearts of two stranger ladies, who were travelling the same road with their own horses and servants. Thus was that ever-dear creature near falling a victim

to her preference of our society to the gaieties of Bath, though she was then the most admired young woman that city boasted, where her father wished to have detained her several more weeks, till his own return into Staffordshire.

Your description of the inundation at Shrewsbury is in climax truly sublime; from the scene of Mrs Ed. Powys and her children at the abbey, insulated from all their friends by rising waters, to your thrilled walk, after the flood had subsided, in the abbey churchyard and church, where you were surrounded by heaps of upturned tombstones, sunk and yet sinking graves, and broken coffins, where the billows had unveiled the sheeted dead. No wonder that your imagination suggested an awful resemblance to that great and terrible day, when the last trumpet shall burst the cearments of the graves.

You ask me after our situation at Lichfield in that period of deluge. We have no river near us. The little brook that supplies our pools gave itself higher airs of watery consequence than it had before assumed in any person's memory; but its feats were rather ludicrous than alarming—ale-barrels sailing, with bursting hoops, out of peoples' cellars into the streets, and mingling their yellow streams with the dirty currents; through which, knee-high, men were splashing

and stumbling in boots; and women without stockings, and with petticoats tucked or held above the water. This burlesque distress lasted but a few hours; and we, on the higher ground of the Close, were perfectly exempt from the inconvenience—our Abyssinian Hill, as, in my happy youthful years, I used to call it.

As to politics, every thing seems of late to have been error and infatuation at the helm. Lord Fitzwilliam's recal from Ireland—the demand of the king upon the public for the debts of his son, in hours like these—all is of the same tissue with the hopeless extravagance of the loan to the Emperor, and the rash continuance of a ruinous and now unmotived war.

My High Lake verses were much honoured by the encomiums of the circuit council. I know the kind pleasure you take in engaging partial attention to my muse. Your mildly earnest eye asks praise of her readers; and who could be such a churl as to refuse to gratify so generous a pleader?

Mr Muckleston, a native of Shrewsbury, and a spruce divine of our cathedral, has brought hither a lovely bride out of Yorkshire. She is a fine marble statue, almost colourless, but of Medicean features and form. Though there is much

youth, these is not much vivacity, but an elegance in her quietness, that breathes of having moved in polite circles. A pretty sister accompanies her. I wish this young couple happy. The bridegroom's good-humour and generosity entitle him to every person's good wishes amid the circle in which he moves.

Heaven knows whether my health will permit me to accept the kind invitation of yourself and family, and that of my other Shropshire friends, to pass a part of this summer amongst them. I have every disposition; but mine is an arbitrary complaint.

My best compliments in your circle. The length of this letter will prove the long silence which preceded it involuntary; and in that trust, my dear Miss Wingfield, I embrace you very affectionately.

LETTER XIV.

Mrs Hayley.

Lichfield, June 19, 1795.

Welcome was your packet—recompensing, by its kindness, and by the cheerful spirit it breathed, your long silence. Now am I convinced that London is your element, the only one in which your mind can fully and freely expand, without recoiling painfully upon itself. The description of your literary societies, your tea-drinkings, charm me. Dr Shaw seems the sun of that little system. I should like to draw light with the rest of his surrounding planets.

Much to be admired is the energy with which you explore new paths of knowledge and science. Middle life is too apt to repose upon the acquirements of its youth, and to shrink from the apprehended labour of extending them.

Yes, I could have been certain Mr Nigel V—— would be one of your favourites. Most of the young men of that house have abilities, all have virtues; but around him only do the softer lights of elegance play. Disease and death have, as

you know, mournfully eclipsed the cheerfulness and comforts of this worthy family, and the melancholy influence will, I fear, long remain. The generous parental indulgence of the aged pair seems doomed to be tried in almost every matrimonial connection formed by their sons. The good qualities of the lady to whom the eldest united himself, have recompensed the much which, from peculiar circumstances, was to be forgiven in that marriage. The choice of the second disappointed their hopes for him, at least as to fortune. Plump Geofry gave them a daughter, whose sprightly graces blended agreeably with his oily placidness; whose cheerful attentions to them are very gratifying, and whose family and fortune were of no mortifying inequality. And Nigel—yes, Nigel, they all pronounced would marry with eclat, or not at all. "His brothers, said they, are all of tempers either retired or eccentric; not, therefore, likely to marry advantageously; but Nigel is a man of the world; he has ambition both professionally and connubially; his eloquence will aid the former, and for the latter, the graces are his handmaids."

I thought with them on this subject, not dreaming that his hereditary virtues were doomed to counteract these probable and pleasant expectations. A Miss M——— was distantly related to

the eldest son's wife, and several years resident with that couple. Without fortune, beauty, modern accomplishments, or consequential connections, she is a very sensible, well-informed, and good young person, with the manners of a gentlewoman. That contagious and fatal fever which robbed the venerable pair of their darling granddaughter, seized Miss M——. In its paroxysms, she raved of Mr Nigel V—— incessantly.—The servants told him. Careless of infectious danger, he rushed to her bedside, and became her constant attendant, soothing and entreating her to live for him; and, on her recovery, adjured his father that he would not oppose his acting as became a man of feeling and honour, nor tempt him to wish for the death of an indulgent parent, by counteracting an attachment founded on gratitude and pity.

Thus, though called to the bar, this elegant young man is content to resign the higher walks of the law, that he may the sooner perform those tender promises, which he believes to have rescued an amiable woman from the grave. He is studying the profession of a country barrister with the most sedulous application.

This is very, *very* good; yet, surely there can be no absolute duty compellant to such a sacrifice, since a man of his very nice honour has, doubtless,

the consciousness of never having tried, by the subtlety of silent seduction, to inspire a passion he did not mean to return. If there were such a duty, every good man lies at the mercy of any woman who may choose to supply the want of fortune and attractions, by a convenient fever and delirium. The little god might then, with impunity, exchange his bow and his darts for a box of pills and a blister.

You have seen Reynolds's snubbed Cupid, who stands a self-convicted criminal before his angry mother, with shame-crimpled knees; the back of one hand held over his eye, and in the other a roll of parchment, which hangs dangling, and inscribed with pecuniary stipulations. Was it for such a purpose, the goddess seems to say,—as she holds up one of his scattered darts,—that I gave you these resistless arms? Was it for that vile parchment you have bartered them? Venus would scarcely have been less indignant of the exchange, had a lancet and a gallipot supplied it.

You will ask me with what temper of mind Mrs —— wears her willows. This time twelvemonth, they would have proved a crown of thorns; but, lo! she assists in the bridal preparations; and, for the brow of a rival,

"She weaves the garland, and she plaits the hair."

But it is no sacrifice; the assiduities of our very agreeable favourite, Mr ———, through the latter end of autumn, and through half the winter, drew all the stings of this inconstancy. He gazed and listened away his heart, while the charmer smiled and warbled. In a few months, he saw the ruinous imprudence, and tore himself from Lichfield. Settled professionally at Shrewsbury, his youth, absence, and varied society will make this self-conquest an easier task than she finds it, to forget him amidst the tranquil sameness of this scene, where every object seems to wear his image, by whose attentions it was dangerously inspirited, when the last wild winter "shook forth his waste of snows."

The musical opinions expressed in your last do not coincide with Giovanni's and mine, to whom the chorusses of Handel are dearer than any other species of music. The exhilaration and rapture with which they inspire me are extreme; so is the admiration they excite of the genius and skill of that great master, as the "volant fugue" bursts from every part of the orchestra successively; the leading air supplied, in turn, by the various orders of voices, and sustained by the rich fulness of the inner harmonies.

Every person here and elsewhere, that I have heard mention K——, except yourself, pronounce

him detestable as an oratorio singer; that his coarse tones, flourishing, and gaudy style of expression, outrage the chaste delicacy of Handel's softer song, nor less the sacred energies of his bolder strains.

Dr Shaw's verses to Mrs Lambert are very elegant. You will gratify me by transmitting more effusions from his muse. I believe I never had the pleasure of knowing Mrs Lambert; with her sister, Miss Bowater, I passed some of the sprightly days of girlism. Well do I remember the mother of these ladies, and she was lovely. The spring of beauty ran brightly and copiously in the blood of the Dixeys and Bayleys, from whom Mrs Lambert is descended.

I say nothing to you of princes, princesses, and politics. The contempt inspired by the conduct of the first, pity for the hard fate of the second, and lost confidence in the rulers of the last, are all unpleasant themes, from which your gay spirit would revolt. May the events, ordained to interest you most, ever wear the accordant hues of cheerfulness and pleasure!

LETTER XV.

Miss Sykes.

Lichfield, June 30, 1795.

I HAVE been impatient of this involuntary delay, in acknowledging a letter, pathetic, interesting, and kind as your last;—in assuring you of the sympathetic concern which often arises, as memory presents this lamented deprivation.

> "O! human life, how mutable! how vain!
> How thy wide sorrows circumscribe thy joys!"

Alas! the affliction I so sincerely pity, must long descend upon the tomb, where hopes like yours lie blasted. I know what I should myself have felt, had my now long-lost Honora been torn from our arms in the first bloom of her youth;—had her resembling talents and graces thus suddenly perished. I am comforted that your venerable parents' waining strength, sunk not totally under the unexpected stroke. Surely your county is more subject to putrid diseases, that sweep through whole families, than ours: particularly of the

throat, to which so many of the Wakefields were victims; and by which, Autumn twelvemonth, the house of Westella was so near sustaining a still heavier loss; an event which, while it must have darkened the remainder of your parents' days, would have absolved *you* from your share of their present woe, and precluded the melancholy sweetness of comforting them under it.

As to the tender love-tale, interwoven with your pathetic narration, you judged rightly in feeling assured that it would interest me; that I should admire the conduct of your father, and love your charming brother, for the sacrifices he is making of ambition and interest, to pity, gratitude, and affection. I cannot think these sacrifices were a duty—but so much less as they were duties, so much more are they generosity. May every happiness ensue and reward the virtue!

I am afresh obliged by the kind wishes of yourself and family, to see me amongst you this summer;—by the gratifying exception in my favour, which dear Mr Sykes makes beneath his averseness to society, out of the pale of his own numerous connections;—by the friendly summons of Mr and Mrs R. Sykes to their hospitable board; but exhaustic circumstances combine with the arbitrary demands of impaired health, to counteract the wishes that point my course to the Humber.

—Coz T. White and his bride-elect make a prodigious point of my attending them to church, and sitting with the bride to receive her company. By this event I shall be detained at home till the latter end of July, and must then go to some of those medical springs which my complaints require: else, be assured I long to see you all again; and that to mingle my sighs with yours more increases that longing than could any prospect of participated amusement.

Surely, dear Miss Sykes, you have shrunk with horror from the ten-times trebled cruelties of the Bastile, which have brought the poor Dauphin to the grave, and which must soon destroy his innocent sister. The old government, at some seldom times, confined in the dreadful solitudes of that prison, individuals who had rendered themselves politically obnoxious—but those unhappy sufferers were kept clean, and at least allowed to sleep in peace. The unoffending royal little ones were not only condemned to languish in solitude and darkness, but their bodies left to perish by slow disease, the certain and torturing consequence of loathsome filth. From month to month, none came to smooth their bed or to give them clean linen, but their food was conveyed to them through holes in the walls, and amidst the accumulated nastiness of a never-opened cell!—their sleep dis-

turbed every hour or two, through the comfortless night, from being obliged, at the imperious call of the brutal centinels, to run naked to those holes, to show that neither death had delivered them from their base oppressors, nor aristocratic stratagem exchanged them for other children.

Never, never was human nature so demonized as in those vile French, authorizing, under every set of democratic rulers, such unprovoked and utterly useless barbarity. While the monsters, who now hold the reins of unorganized government, were anathematizing their fellow-monsters, the fallen party, for cruelty, themselves were exerting a still more infamous degree of it, upon the sweet innocent children of their too-indulgent, their murdered king.

That such detestable and impious wretches are not permitted to be crushed, rendered a warning to other nations, and an awful example of the chastizement of an outraged Deity, seems incomprehensible; but God, in his own time, will punish these blasphemous and cruel republicans, and avenge the injured in the sight of men and angels.

As to the present measures of this country, I am sorry to say I think them as impolitic and rash as you can do. Persisting in a war originally just, but now become hopeless, we seem to forget

that there is a God to punish the wicked without our waste of blood and treasure in a desperate cause. Unwarned by the consequence of our first criminally extravagant loan to Prussia, its repetition to the emperor in times like these, with exhausted resources, and an impending famine, in my opinion, deserves and calls loudly for the impeachment of those, whose callous insensibility to the sufferings of their country, have dared to bring it forward.

"O Pitt! thou long-refulgent star,
That rolled the nation's azure car
Thro' blissful climes, where olives strew'd the way,
How art thou fallen, thou son of light,
How fallen from thy meridian height,
Who saidst, the distant lands shall hear me and obey!"

I was in hopes a fine summer would have succeeded that wild winter which so long shook forth its waste of horrors, pregnant with more than common mischiefs:—but here is the longest day past, and we are yet shivering by our fires, without having obtained scarce a week in which the biting east has not generally howled.

This is the period of inconceivable characters, as well as of unexpected and prodigious events. The modern Thalestris is now in this city, Mademoiselle le Chevalier D'Eon, exhibiting, for two

shillings admittance, her skill in the art of attack and defence with the single rapier.

Melancholy reverse of human destiny! what an humiliation for the aide-de-camp of Marshal Broglio!—for the ambassador, during five years, from the court of France to that of Russia!—for the envoy to ours, and the principal planner and negociator of the peace of 1782!—In the German war, she lived five years in camps and tented fields, amidst the pride, the pomp, and circumstance of high trust and glorious contest. In the American war, she was in five battles, fought against General Elliot, and received six wounds;—and all this before her sex was discovered.

I learned from herself, that a destiny so astonishing was not originally the result of voluntary choice. Her parents bred her up as a boy, to avoid losing an estate entailed on the heir-male.

She seems to have a noble, independent, as well as intrepid mind;—and the muscular strength and activity of her large frame at sixty-nine, are wonderful. She fences in the French uniform, and then appears an athletic, venerable, graceful man. In the female garb, as might be expected, she is awkwardly, though not vulgarly masculine.

In three days she was to have sailed for France, by the order of the late unfortunate monarch, to

have resumed her male dress, and to have taken military command as General, when the massacre at the Thuilleries, and imprisonment of the king, lamentably frustrated that design, and probably dropt an eternal curtain over her career of glory. Adieu! adieu!

LETTER XVI.

Miss Wingfield.

Lichfield, July 15, 1795.

I am obliged, beyond the power of saying how much, my dear Miss Wingfield, by the comfortable particulars of your friend's case, and by the friendly wish you express, in the name of your whole family, to receive me at once as your own visitor, and the patient of Mr Sutton. His treatment of Miss ——, and its success, gives me confidence in his skill; but, as I am pursuing exactly the same plan by my own surgeon, Mr Panting's direction, and as I am lately much better respecting this dispiriting local pain, I hope farther assistance is not necessary. Though I dare not bathe, my physician thinks the sea-air, and its wa-

ter taken internally, would be salutary to my general health. Either to some of the Welch coasts, or to that of High Lake, it is therefore my present purpose to repair, so soon as my cousin T. White's wedding ceremonies, which I have promised to attend, shall be over. If you are all to be at home by previous determination at that period, I mean to indulge myself with passing a few days beneath excellent Mr and Mrs Wingfield's hospitable roof.

And now, I can no longer delay the mention of a severe shock my spirits have sustained this week, by the loss, in a manner the most awfully impressive, of a dear friend, and the nearest relation I possessed—for he was my first cousin—Mr Martin, one of the most eminent of the merchants engaged in the hosiery manufacture of Nottingham. Intimately known to me from our mutual infancy, there breathed not a man for whom I felt greater esteem, or who more entirely merited the high reputation he bore. Engaged in partnership with Mr Statham, a man of fortune superior to his own, he extended the commercial interests of their house, with the most active and liberal energy, with never-questioned integrity, and with the nicest sense of honour;—and he was one "that never thought his purse his own if his friend needed it." I have not found more truth

and day-light in any human bosom, with an understanding which would have done credit to any profession. I could tell you acts of beneficence of his, that were more than generous—they were noble. Solicitously tender and ardent in his affections, there was a corresponding quickness in his resentments; but the violence was momentary—the least show of kindness could instantly appease him.

> "He carried anger as the flint bears fire,
> That much inforced shows an hasty spark,
> And straight is cold again."

His commercial connections obliged him to pass two months of every year in Ireland. Thither he went in April last. His wife, and the eldest of his two infant daughters, came to pass beneath my roof the last month of his absence. We had the pleasure to see him join us on his return, in health and spirits, on Wednesday se'ennight. Business required his presence at Nottingham the ensuing Monday and Tuesday, but he promised to come back on Wednesday, and to pass a whole week with Mrs Martin at this house; after which it was necessary they should all return to Nottingham. Naturally cheerful, and even gay, I never saw him more jocund than at breakfast last Satur-

day morning, before he set out upon his ride to Nottingham.

Ah! my God, how little did his poor wife and myself divine that we should neither of us behold him more! An express arrived in the middle of Monday night, to say, that at twelve that day, at a public meeting, to which he had repaired with every appearance of health and vivacity—and after having delivered his benevolent sentiments for the relief of the poor with easy cheerfulness, turning, with a smile, to his friend who sat behind him, he dropt into his arms in an apoplexy—an attack which his slender form rendered most unlikely.—Think of his wife's agonies, on tidings being imparted to her of such deep calamity. Notwithstanding the calmness of her temperament, they were extreme;—the stroke so unexpected—the impending loss so irreparable. She set out in an hour after she received this dread summons; he died in three hours after her arrival. She was not permitted to see him, as he had never shown the least symptom of consciousness since he fell from the summit of life and health, in one moment, a breathing corse. How awful!—to us that loved him, how afflicting:—but to himself, though he much enjoyed life, and was only forty-six years of age—yet surely to himself, a blessing that he was thus, with only one instantaneous

pang, snatched from a world in which calamity, in some shape or other, hovers over the most prosperous,—translated into a perpetuity of peace and joy, to which, we may humbly hope, virtues like his were an immediate passport.

Though my beloved cousin was too generous, and lived with too much elegant hospitality to be very wealthy, yet I have reason to believe his wife, fifteen years younger than himself, and her two little girls, will have a very genteel provision. Avoiding ostentatious expence, she may render competence plenty.

I have often thought he would not be a long-lived man, from the energy of his temper and habits overbalancing the delicacy of his constitution; yet little did I apprehend the sudden fate which cut him off, in the summer of his days,

" With open brow, and a yet smiling eye,
That wish'd long health and virtue to his friend.
An instant rush from life's meridian joys!
A wrench from all he lov'd!—from all he was!
The sun extinguish'd—the dark yawning grave!"

Pardon me from dwelling so long on this sad theme, which has occupied my whole mind during the week.

That the young Duke of Somerset, and his ingenious tutor, thought it worth their while to

visit such an autumnal spinster as myself, was very flattering. They came on the evening of our chartered gala, Whitsun-Monday;—once, a day of festal and social enjoyment for all ranks in our city and its environs—such it was during my infancy, and through the first five years of my teens. Since that period, refinement has taught our gentry to despise such a promiscuous, and innocently democratic celebration, and to consign its noisy and gaudy pleasures to the vulgar.

I was, as I generally am on that day, almost alone in my house, permitting all my servants, excepting one maid, to repair to the morris-dancing revel. Indisposed, dispirited, and in more than usual dishabille as they found me, I expected that they would finely have rallied each other upon the result of their curiosity. That they spoke to Lord Bagot and yourself with so much flattering pleasure of the interview, transcended my utmost hope. The Duke is a very fine young man, and Mr Mitchell very intelligent.

Unless I was from home, and my servants neglected to inform me, Mr C. B. did not call, as Mrs Plowden told you he purposed. The second of those beauteous widows, whose hearts he once possessed, will probably amuse herself differently than in fondly looking back to the first tender impression of her youthful bosom, should he at-

tempt, which I think he will not do, to revive its traces. They are, in all likelihood, overwhelmed, and sunk in the tide of time. Adieu.

LETTER XVII.

Mr C——.

Lichfield, July 31, 1795.

I WAS disappointed that we did not meet on Wednesday. Your friend L., since I wrote to you last, has inspired, by some intelligence he imparted, a double earnestness to converse with you. Your welfare is dear to me,—and, in proportion as I wish your happiness, am I alarmed by that intelligence. You will guess that he has told me of your inclination to renounce the clerical for the military life;—the endeavour to promote the moral virtue and piety of a part of your fellow-creatures, for that of destroying them at the mandate of a king and his ministers.

No man who, like yourself, has a deeply-thinking mind, and nicely-scrupulous conscience, ought to be a soldier. The moment that he has the least doubt of the justice of the cause in which

his country engages, he may call himself her defender, but his secret heart will tell him that he is an hireling assassin.

So much for the employment and exertion you pant after during the period of war. Let us now consider the grave, the contemplative, the studious, and lettered young man of genius, in "the piping time of peace" and inexertion, wandering from town to town, perhaps into distant climates, inimical to health and life, with a set of silly, uninformed, and, because ignorant, insolent coxcombs, in whose, at best, frothy, and probably indecent and profane conversation, he must at least pass the social hours of meal-time, through a course of tedious years. If no other than the meal-time hours, he will be hated for shunning that intercourse which, to partake more largely, must, to a mind so tempered, prove inexpressibly irksome. Despised whether he shares or shuns—despised and ridiculed as the learned quiz, he will inevitably be, amongst such associates. O! remember Swift's poetic maxim of eternal truth:

> "Great examples are in vain
> Where ignorance begets disdain."

Reflect also upon the disadvantages in the line of promotion and rank that must result from your

going so late into a profession for which you are, of all others, least calculated;—where your fine talents will be but useless incumbrances;—where you will be the junior of boys, and subject to their imperious commands.

Read, I adjure you, in the first volume of the Rambler, the nineteenth number; it is upon the importance of an early choice of profession. Consider well its contents, for they are the dictates of a judgment which seldom erred, except from the lamented prevalence of personal antipathy, political prejudice, or jealous spleen. To the perusal of that essay, I beg leave to request your attention to the ensuing passages from one of yet more incomparable importance to human happiness—Mrs Barbauld's Essay against Inconsistency in our Expectations. She says, with an oracular pen,

"We should consider this world as a great mart of commerce, where fortune holds out to us various commodities, riches, ease, fame, integrity, knowledge. Every thing is marked at a settled price. Our time, our labour, our ingenuity, are so much ready money, which we are to lay out to the best advantage. Examine, choose, compare, reject; but stand to your own judgment, and do not, like children, when you have purchased one thing,

lament that you do not possess another, which you did not purchase.

"There is no faculty which so much dignifies the human creature as consistency of conduct. Even if a man's pursuits are unjustifiable, yet, if they are maintained with steadiness and vigour, we cannot altogether withhold our admiration. It is the characteristic of a great mind to choose, on entering life, some one important object, and to pursue it with firmness and perseverance."

A profession was necessary to you, C——. On the dawn of manhood your father desired you to choose one. You did choose, and were, at a considerable expence, educated for that chosen line: a profession most suitable to your studious disposition and classical inclinations;—in which your fine poetic talent, that distinguishing grace of your nature, might best be cultivated, and which it may best adorn. And now, that the choice has long been made, the qualifying studies pursued, and the requisite acquirements attained, you are disposed to renounce it for one miserably ill-calculated to every bent of your mind, every habit of your life, every feeling of your heart.

You apprehend that the life of a country clergyman will be dull and inactive;—but at least, so

situated, your time, your books, your liberty, in all respects but as to place of residence, will be yours;—and place is little to a mind rich in its resources. As a soldier you will not have your liberty in any of these circumstances. If you dislike village retirement, you may live in the university, take pupils, acquire literary fame, and associate with literary men.

There is another consideration, which I request permission to enforce with all the sincerity and solicitude of friendship—your filial duty. You have an affectionate and indulgent father. Will you not govern yourself towards him by that golden precept which involves the whole moral duties? "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you." Put yourself in his situation: Imagine that you have a son, who, after you had allowed him to choose his own profession; after having, at a considerable expence, educated him for that profession;—after you had often felt and expressed your conviction that it was, above every other, adapted to his genius, his habits, and to your own powers of serving him:—then, when on its verge, to see him recoiling, with unmanly fickleness, and turning aside into a path where it is totally unlikely that he should attain either content, distinction, or emolument;

and in which you have no prospect of being able materially to assist him.

Such I understand are Mr C.'s convictions respecting this strange fancy, unworthy of your understanding in its unsteadiness, and in its blindness to the certainly ensuing consequences.—What pain would such conduct in a beloved son give you!

The former part of my letter appeals to your reason, this last to your feelings. If, after having awakened that self-examination, which it is meant to excite, you can endure to persist in thus disappointing and grieving so kind a parent, and so worthy a man, I shall think I have mistaken the texture of your heart.

> "Now, Henry, now the last reflection make,
> What you must follow—what you must forsake!"

And, above all, whom you must afflict! Farewell.

LETTER XVIII.

Miss Wingfield.

Dinbren, Wales, August 14, 1795.

Safe and pleasant was my journey hither. The kindness of my reception in your family, its social pleasures, and the sweetness of those attentions with which you honoured me, left sunny impressions upon my mind, resembling the tinges of a summer sky, from which a soft and golden day had receded.

The Vale of Langollen more than answered my expectations, high as were the claims they had made upon its beauty. The loveliest scenes of my native Derbyshire resemble, but do not equal it. Langollen is much richer, from its mountains being more frequently and more lavishly curtained; from tall branching hedge-rows that encircle, with wavy lines, the small and slanting meads, copses, and tufted glens, that sink between those mountains, which, in various and fantastic forms, conic, round, pointed, or of broken outline, nature has thrown about with disordered but graceful violence. They often intersect each

other, are extremely high, but less broad and continued than those of the Peak. Therefore is it that they produce a more enchanting variety of darkling glens, woods, and rocks, and verdant enclosures.

Dinbren, my present residence, the villa of my friends, Mr and Mrs Roberts, high on a mountain's brow, is a scene of more greatness, more wild sublimity, with less sylvan luxuriance. Very closely does it resemble some of the most boldly picturesque parts of the Peak. Four spacious rooms have been lately built, and are yet unfinished. The south front, which is the aspect of the present habitable and thrice-pleasant apartments, commands a mountainous landscape of Juan-Fernandez seclusion;—two shelving copses, sable with umbrage, and divided by three or four bright fields of gentle declivity, and a woody lane that winds between them. These few, but lovely objects, are shut up, as in a basin, by a cluster of near mountains. They form three parts of the circle, which, on the left, is completed by a wall of grey, barren, and craggy rocks, called the Eglwsig Rocks*, meaning the rocks of the eagles. The central mountain of this basined landscape is a cone of nearly perpendicular steep-

* The name is pronounced as if spelt thus, Egloosig.—S.

ness, a bare and tolerably verdant turf, without a tree, or even shrub, on its ascent, and crowned with the pale unfoliaged ruins of Castle Dinas Bran, so particularly described by Mr Pennant: a once proud and princely edifice, where dwelt, in the 13th century, the Welch Laura, the Lady Myfanwy Vechan, poetically celebrated by the Bard Howel,—another Petrarch, who sighed and sung of unattainable beauty, which impelled him, as he elegantly expresses it, to "purchase fame by misfortune." The thought concludes a beautiful poem to her charms, a translation of which, together with the story, adorn Mr Pennant's Tour.

The other, and best front of this house, containing the new apartments, catches, between the sloping foot of the conic and turreted mountain, and that of the broader eminence, on which Mr Roberts lives, part of Langollen Vale, through which the river of classic memory, the gulfy, but bright-watered Deva, foams. Its often shallow and rocky channel sends the noise of its streams to this mountain's brow.

We have passed the greatest part of the morning upon the walk that winds along the hill, whose summit is somewhat higher than the terrace on which this villa stands. From thence we inhaled some of the purest air I ever breathed, and which,

compared to that of flatter countries, is as the taste of Pyrmont to common water.

From our seats, on this elevation, we looked into the peerless vale;—upon the little town from whence it takes its name;—and, beyond that, upon the fairy palace of the two celebrated ladies, to whom I hope for the honour and happiness of paying my respects ere I leave this country.

The profusion of white farm-houses and cottages, which thickly spot the valley, with their blue spiral wreaths of smoke, ascending amidst the woods in which they are embosomed, diffuse an air of vitality, association, and comfort, which sweetly contrasts the romantic loneliness of the basined landscape on the other side the house.

Langollen Vale has been, and will for ever remain, memorable as the birth-place of "the irregular and wild Glendower," who, to regain the freedom of his country, so long opposed the forces of Henry the IV. He gave the Cambrians to boast it as their Welch Thermopylæ, by himself and his small army cutting their way through the numerous legions of the English, in a narrow pass at the foot of one of its mountains. This heroism was repeated in a rocky strait at the base of Plinlimmon.

I purpose setting out for Barmouth very soon, and must try to console myself for the loss of

Mr and Mrs Morhall's and Colonel Dowdeswell's society, by the superior healthiness of that shore to the flatter coast of Liverpool.

You shall hear from me again when I reach the ocean-side.—Meantime, be assured that the late engaging testimonies of your amity are registered

"Where, every day, I turn the leaf to read them."

LETTER XIX.

Rev. H. White, of Lichfield.

Barmouth, Wales, Aug. 30, 1795.

Abstraction from a small society is more difficult than from a large one; and having travelled so far, and in part so perilously, merely for sea-air, I could not refuse Mrs Zachary's kind offer of taking me upon the sands in her chaise every fine morning. When the horses have drawn us to the ocean's brim, they are taken off, and we pursue our needleworks in the steedless vehicle during two or three hours; the tide approaching or receding from us gradually. I also walk an

hour on the sands before breakfast.—Judge how little time I have for writing, and pardon my silence. After dinner there is no deserting Mrs Zachary with any civility or gratitude, especially since, though we have plenty of agreeable gentlemen at our table, there is only one stationary lady besides ourselves. Another family, it is true, are here, but they live wholly to themselves; for the melancholy reason that, since they left home on this tour, they have lost the mistress of it by a cancerous complaint, and a lovely daughter of their house, not nineteen, by consumption. It is Mr Wise of the Priory, Warwick, who, with his two surviving daughters and son, are breathing to each other the sighs of deprivation on the edge of these freightless, these lonely seas.

They inhabit the largest and most airy house in Barmouth. Total strangers as they are to me, yet, with the kindness of old friends, they sent to offer me a bed-chamber and parlour, because they thought their situation more conducive to health than my present lodgings. For a civility so unexpected, you may be assured I feel very grateful.

Transcendent as is the scenery I have passed through on my journey hither, and which reaches to within half a mile of this sea-port, yet the place itself cannot vie with Hoyle Lake in any respect.

The immediately surrounding objects are barren and monotonous; and a large bed of sand, ancle deep, through which we are obliged to plough ere we can approach the sea, is toilsome to excess; still more toilsome the steep and clumsy sand-banks over which we must climb. They render *these* solitary waters tame as those of Hoyle, without her numerous vessels, her pleasant downs, or any of her sylvan beauties, which the Flintshire coast so richly presents to those who sojourn on her verdant promontory. Here, indeed, when we do reach the sea, the silver sands of Barmouth cannot well be exceeded in smoothness and extent, nor its waves in the emerald clearness of their tint.

I pass over the four mildly pleasing days I passed at Shrewsbury with dear Mrs Wingfield and her amiable family. One circumstance, however, I must not omit, in grateful devotion to the remembrance of that period when Lichfield to me was Eden. In the year 1770, Lord Warwick, then Lord Greville, at our races, saw and admired my transcendent Honora Sneyd. When their bustle was over, he passed a quiet day and evening at my father's. It was to us, and it seemed to him, an interesting day; loitering on the terrace with myself and the Armida of its bowers, we conversed as the hours of our new-born amity had

been years. He was very amiable, and seemed to quit us, the next morning, with a regret that breathed something more tender than the name he gave it—friendship. She, however, never beheld him afterwards,—nor I, till, walking in the Quarry with Mrs and Miss Wingfield, the tenth evening of this month, we met his Lordship with Lady Warwick, their son and daughter. I knew him instantly. Time has passed over Lord Warwick with almost printless feet. They were acquainted with my friends, and joined us;—but it is the rule of my life never to force myself on the attention of the great, so I made the stranger-courtesy, scarce perceptible.

Lord W. looked at me earnestly, and whispered Mrs Wingfield. On her answer, he sprung forward to meet me with the warmth and cordiality of a long-absent friend, and introduced me to his lady, who said the most polite and obliging things. Then he spoke of Honora, declared that he had always inquired after her with interest, and often lamented her early death;—did glowing justice to all her graces, and enchanted my spirit with the pensive luxury of sympathetic retrospection.

As I have things to describe to you in my next, which you have not seen, I shall not attempt to delineate the beauties of Langollen Vale, nor the

Salvatorial features of Mr Roberts' situation. Your memory presents them to you in tints, compared to which the traces of my pen must be colourless and cold.

And now permit me to thank you for your attention to the letters which have arrived for me since I left home. I never received that which Mrs Temple complains of my not having answered. Surely another correspondence with a stranger is not to be added to my epistolary labours. Alas! in what inextricable toil has the dread of appearing ungrateful involved me!—for life involved me!—Yet people wonder that I do not write more poems, and publish them. So I would if, like Joshua, I could bid the sun, or rather the earth, stand still, and it would obey the mandate.

For amiable Miss Gresley's continued indisposition, and for Mr Eliot's accident, I am truly sorry. It is melancholy that the light of reason and comic originality should be utterly darkened with poor Peter Garrick, before the long and mornless night descends. Adieu!

LETTER XX.

THE REV. HENRY WHITE, of Lichfield.

Barmouth, Sept. 7, 1795.

I RESUME my pen, to speak to you of that enchanting unique, in conduct and situation, of which you have heard so much, though, as yet, without distinct description. You will guess that I mean the celebrated ladies of Langollen Vale, their mansion, and their bowers.

By their own invitation, I drank tea with them thrice during the nine days of my visit to Dinbren; and, by their kind introduction, partook of a rural dinner, given by their friend, Mrs Ormsby, amid the ruins of Valle-Crucis, an ancient abbey, distant a mile and a half from their villa. Our party was large enough to fill three chaises and two phaetons.

We find the scenery of Valle-Crucis grand, silent, impressive, awful. The deep repose, resulting from the high umbrageous mountains which rise immediately around those ruins, solemnly harmonizes with their ivied arches and broken columns. Our drive to it from the love-

ly villa leads through one of the most picturesque parts of the peerless vale, and along the banks of the classic river.

After dinner, our whole party returned to drink tea and coffee in that retreat, which breathes all the witchery of genius, taste, and sentiment. You remember Mr Hayley's poetic compliment to the sweet miniature painter, Miers:

> " His magic pencil, in its narrow space,
> Pours the full portion of uninjur'd grace."

So may it be said of the talents and exertion which converted a cottage, in two acres and a half of turnip ground, to a fairy-palace, amid the bowers of Calypso.

It consists of four small apartments; the exquisite cleanliness of the kitchen, its utensils, and its auxiliary offices, vieing with the finished elegance of the gay, the lightsome little dining-room, as that contrasts the gloomy, yet superior grace of the library, into which it opens.

This room is fitted up in the Gothic style, the door and large sash windows of that form, and the latter of painted glass, " shedding the dim religious light." Candles are seldom admitted into this apartment.—The ingenious friends have invented a kind of prismatic lantern, which occu-

pies the whole elliptic arch of the Gothic door. This lantern is of cut glass, variously coloured, enclosing two lamps with their reflectors. The light it imparts resembles that of a volcano, sanguine and solemn. It is assisted by two glow-worm lamps, that, in little marble reservoirs, stand on the opposite chimney-piece, and these supply the place of the here always chastized day-light, when the dusk of evening sables, or when night wholly involves the thrice-lovely solitude.

A large Eolian harp is fixed in one of the windows, and, when the weather permits them to be opened, it breathes its deep tones to the gale, swelling and softening as that rises and falls.

> " Ah me! what hand can touch the strings so fine,
> Who up the lofty diapason roll
> Such sweet, such sad, such solemn airs divine,
> And let them down again into the soul!"

This saloon of the Minervas contains the finest editions, superbly bound, of the best authors, in prose and verse, which the English, Italian, and French languages boast, contained in neat wire cases: over them the portraits, in miniature, and some in larger ovals, of the favoured friends of these celebrated votaries to that sentiment which exalted the characters of Theseus and Perithous, of David and Jonathan.

Between the picture of Lady Bradford and the chimney-piece hangs a beautiful entablature, presented to the ladies of Langollen Vale by Madam Sillery, late Madam Genlis. It has convex miniatures of herself and of her pupil, Pamela; between them, pyramidally placed, a garland of flowers, copied from a nosegay, gathered by Lady Eleanor in her bowers, and presented to Madam Sillery.

The kitchen-garden is neatness itself. Neither there, nor in the whole precincts, can a single weed be discovered. The fruit-trees are of the rarest and finest sort, and luxuriant in their produce; the garden-house, and its implements, arranged in the exactest order.

Nor is the dairy-house, for one cow, the least curiously elegant object of this magic domain. A short steep declivity, shadowed over with tall shrubs, conducts us to the cool and clean repository. The white and shining utensils that contain the milk, and cream, and butter, are pure "as snows thrice bolted in the northern blast." In the midst, a little machine, answering the purpose of a churn, enables the ladies to manufacture half a pound of butter for their own breakfast, with an apparatus which finishes the whole process without manual operation.

The wavy and shaded gravel-walk which en-

circles this Elysium, is enriched with curious shrubs and flowers. It is nothing in extent, and every thing in grace and beauty, and in variety of foliage; its gravel smooth as marble. In one part of it we turn upon a small knoll, which overhangs a deep hollow glen. In its tangled bottom, a frothing brook leaps and clamours over the rough stones in its channel. A large spreading beech canopies the knoll, and a semilunar seat, beneath its boughs, admits four people. A board, nailed to the elm, has this inscription,

"O cara Selva! e Fiumicello amato!"

It has a fine effect to enter the little Gothic library, as I first entered it, at the dusk hour. The prismatic lantern diffused a light gloomily glaring. It was assisted by the paler flames of the petit lamps on the chimney-piece, while, through the opened windows, we had a darkling view of the lawn on which they look, the concave shrubbery of tall cypress, yews, laurels, and lilachs; of the woody amphitheatre on the opposite hill, that seems to rise immediately behind the shrubbery; and of the grey barren mountain which, then just visible, forms the back ground. The evening-star had risen above the mountain; the airy harp loudly rung to the breeze, and completed the magic of the scene.

You will expect that I say something of the enchantresses themselves, beneath whose plastic wand these peculiar graces arose. Lady Eleanor is of middle height, and somewhat beyond the *embonpoint* as to plumpness; her face round and fair, with the glow of luxuriant health. She has not fine features, but they are agreeable;—enthusiasm in her eye, hilarity and benevolence in her smile. Exhaustless is her fund of historic and traditionary knowledge, and of every thing passing in the present eventful period. She has uncommon strength and fidelity of memory; and her taste for works of imagination, particularly for poetry, is very awakened, and she expresses all she feels with an ingenuous ardour, at which the cold-spirited beings stare. I am informed that both these ladies read and speak most of the modern languages. Of the Italian poets, especially of Dante, they are warm admirers.

Miss Ponsonby, somewhat taller than her friend, is neither slender nor otherwise, but very graceful. Easy, elegant, yet pensive, is her address and manner:

"Her voice, like lovers watch'd, is kind and low."

A face rather long than round, a complexion clear, but without bloom, with a countenance

which, from its soft melancholy, has peculiar interest. If her features are not beautiful, they are very sweet and feminine. Though the pensive spirit within permits not her lovely dimples to give mirth to her smile, they increase its sweetness, and, consequently, her power of engaging the affections. We see, through their veil of shading reserve, that all the talents and accomplishments which enrich the mind of Lady Eleanor, exist, with equal powers, in this her charming friend.

Such are these extraordinary women, who, in the bosom of their deep retirement, are sought by the first characters of the age, both as to rank and talents. To preserve that retirement from too frequent invasion, they are obliged to be somewhat coy as to accessibility.

When we consider their intellectual resources, their energy and industry, we are not surprised to hear them asserting, that, though they have not once forsaken their vale, for thirty hours successively, since they entered it seventeen years ago; yet neither the long summer's day, nor winter's night, nor weeks of imprisoning snows, ever inspired one weary sensation, one wish of returning to that world, first abandoned in the bloom of youth, and which they are yet so perfectly qualified to adorn.

Travelling hither, we found the country rising

into yet bolder and sublimer beauty on our progress —the mountains more vast, and more magnificent that *night* of woods which generally clothes them; though sometimes they aspire the clouds in the grey grandeur of barrenness—while nothing was ever so richly umbrageous as the vales and the glens at their feet, interspersed with meads of the freshest verdure, and with rocks that thrust their craggy points, and lift their angular eminences, whose sterility finely constrasts the woody luxuriance of the general scene. The Deva, always visible, and drawing his " wizard waters" in lines of light, from his rising out of the Lake Bala, through the long track of beauteous vales, Llandynion, Landesillis, Valle-Crucis, and Langollen, extending at least twenty miles. So unpropitious, however, was the wet and cheerless day, that it was through shrouds of rainy mists that we but in part discerned this all-surpassing scenery beneath, as our road zoned the midway of the Alpine steeps which overhung it.

We slept at Bala the first night, that boasts her silver lake eleven miles in circumference. Another rainy morn—but it soon cleared up after we had resumed our journey. We found the road comparatively dreary during about eight miles;—the mountains were vast, but uniformly barren, and the vales at their feet had little luxuriance;

but during the remaining ten miles, that lead us to Dolgelly, romantic Beauty resumed all her empire, with the sublime addition of cataracts thundering down the rocks. These were the present of our late rains. One of them was super-eminent in grandeur and picturesque grace. In the dark recess of some immense and over-arching rocks, two large and roaring torrents met, which had descended from their sides, and spread wide sheets of snowy foam in the gloomy chasm.

Waiting for horses at Dolgelly till after five, they at last gave us tired ones; and I have since learned that they were stone-blind. A circumstance so cruel involved us in perils that might have appalled a stouter heart than mine. In the midway to Barmouth night overtook us. Then it was that our miserable horses refused to draw on every ascent, standing stock still, insensible alike to the coaxing or the lashes of the driver; and this though we always alighted, creeping on foot up every hill, with immense fatigue to me, and with terror inexpressible.

But for one fortunate circumstance, amid those wild and savage heights must we have passed the night, stunned with the din of unseen torrents, pouring down the rocks above—a noise which darkness rendered horrible—while intervening seas were breaking in at the feet of those precipices on

whose edge we travelled.—Fortunately we met with two stout peasants, who, by our bribing high, were induced to accompany us to Barmouth, to assist the horses in dragging the empty chaise up the hills, and to walk between our horses and the precipices when we were in our vehicle. Luckily it did not rain, though the infant moon was shrouded in threatening blackness. The road, by day-light, is not very unsafe, though sufficiently alarming. It leads through magnificent scenery of rocks and woods, interspersed with arms of the sea, and the ocean lying in front,—but the veil of night concealed its charms from us, and trebled all its dangers. Ah! how welcome the glimmering lights of the Barmouth windows.—It was eleven ere we arrived. From a projection of the rocks, there was no appearance of human habitation till we immediately descended into the town. Nothing, till then, could our wearied eyes discern through the gloom, but a vast ocean, howling and harbourless.

I must not conclude my letter without observing, that, on my second visit to the fairy palace, a lovely Being cast around its apartments the soft lunar rays of her congenial beauty.—Mrs Tighe, the wife of one of my friend's nephews, an elegant and intelligent young gentleman, whom I should have observed more had his wife's beauty been less. I used the

word *lunar* as characteristic of that beauty, for it is not resplendent and sunny, like Mrs Plummer's, but, as it were, shaded, though exquisite. She is scarcely two-and-twenty. Is it not too much that Aonian inspiration should be added to the cestus of Venus? She left an elegant and accurate sonnet, addressed to Lady E. Butler and her friend, on leaving their enchanting bowers.

Lady Cunliffe, of whom you have often heard me talk with delight, was here for a day or two the beginning of the week. We met as old friends. She is the same intelligent, interesting, amiable creature with whom I passed a month so pleasantly at Buxton in the autumn 1784—but eleven years have made some havock in her beauty;—unless the swart power of these fierce suns, exposed to them during several days, as she had been, in an open carriage, and the dust and dishabille of travelling, had greatly increased the tarnishing power of time. Seeing her now, you would say she was a very fine woman; but would scarcely conceive how divinely handsome she was at the period above mentioned. Her lilies and roses are exchanged for the unblended flush of sun-burnt health. Ah! if my dear Honora, whom she then so strikingly resembled, had lived to this hour, she would probably have been as much, perhaps more, altered. It is these changes that make it so desir-

able to possess good pictures of our lovely friends, before time shall either fade or bronze them. If, like my sister and Honora, they die young, their beauty lives, in undecaying youth, in the memory of their contemporaries; but if they grow old by our side, we insensibly lose the distinct recollection of what they once were, without the assistance of the pencil.

This bright morning has risen upon me with better health on its wings. I have accepted the very kind offer of Mr Wise and his engaging daughters, and am settled in delightful apartments, situate on an high terrace, that looks immediately down upon this vast mass of animated water. I sit writing at an open sash-window, inhaling its salubrious gales. The tide is flowing up, and rolls its green waves in light.

What mercifully fine weather is ripening the golden harvest that waves through our land! O! that to this gracious boon of Heaven, our rulers would endeavour to add the blessings of peace!—that, of all the allied powers, the English would not be the last to grow wise, and bid the sanguinary sword sleep in its scabbard!

LETTER XXI.

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER.

Emral, near Wrexham, Sep. 27, 1795.

THE distance between Langollen and Emeral is longer than I supposed. I had a degree of pain during the journey, that sunk my spirits extremely, inspiring a fear that it might be the last I should find strength or cheerfulness to undertake. Alas! dearest ladies, much did that despondence deepen the regret, that my ear no longer drank the sweet sounds of condescending kindness and confidential friendship, with which I had been honoured beneath the Arcadian bowers!

I found my beloved Mrs Price with a party of friends around her. Yesterday we dined at Brenny-Peaw, taking Gwemheylid, which, in English, means Sunny-Alders, in our way. I had heard much of the scene.—It is certainly a fine one, though not exactly that which enchants me. The prospect is very extensive. It commands the spires of Chester, distant twenty-miles; and the terminating mountains beyond, are too distant for

effect. A pendant wood, sloping down to the valley, stretches on, two miles to the right, from the lawns which surround the house. Beautiful walks are cut through this wood. In one part, there is an elegant summer-house, in another, one of the most natural and picturesque grottos I have seen. The meadows of this valley are richly verdant, and the vast number of fine cattle they feed, suggest patriarchal ideas which are very agreeable.

The Deva winds along the expansive and fertile vale with capricious beauty; and her lucid and singular twinings form the characteristic grace of the scene.

Yesterday we dined with a venerable pair at Broughton, in a right venerable mansion, spacious, and surrounded by large gardens, laid out in the last century. Every thing in and round this house breathes the spirit of ancient days, without their decay.

To-morrow, Mr Hughes, of this neighbourhood, after having new fronted, new-names his house.—It is to be a gala of dinner, ball, and supper. We are invited, but I must be excused.—I am not in health for "such late wasseling."

This neighbourhood is rich in gentlemens seats, whose inhabitants are convivially generous, and meet often: consequently that retirement, so dear to me in country-residence, is not likely to

be mine while I stay at Emral. It seems peculiarly suited to the genius of this place, whose mansion, whose gardens and groves are mellowed, and sobered by vestiges of antiquity.

I have the honour to remain, with every grateful impression, and the most admiring esteem, dear Lady Eleanor and her charming friend's obliged and affectionate servant.

LETTER XXII.

Mrs Parry Price, of Chester.

Lichfield, Oct. 15, 1795.

Since we separated at Emral, no waking hour has passed without presenting your image, and the remembrance of that fortnight which your kindness, our mutual friendship and confidence, rendered so interesting; how they illuminated my hours of ease and cheerfulness, and how sweetly they soothed those of pain and apprehension.

My way back to Shrewsbury lay through a soft and smiling country, whose scenes were gilded by a mild autumnal sun. The pellucid lakes of Ellesmere, with the gently sloping hills, cover-

ed with umbrage, circling round their banks, and rising immediately from them, pleased me much.

I divided the remainder of the week between Mrs Morhall and Mrs Fownes, in that gay town, which Shenstone, in his Spenseric poem, the Schoolmistress, has so beautifully apostrophized.

> " Admir'd Salopia!—that with venial pride,
> Viewst thy fair form in Severn's crystal wave!"

We were in a round of company, beneath Mr and Mrs Morhall's elegant and thrice-hospitable roof. I had the pleasure of conversing there, one morning, with amiable Lady Warwick.

Our journey home on Monday proved safe and tolerably pleasant. The road is, as you know, generally uninteresting. Some thrills of tender melancholy pain arose, as they must ever arise, on passing the walls of Weston,

> " Where dear Honora's pale remains are laid."

I found my return embittered by sad intelligence;—the sudden death of your and my relation, Miss Hinckley, the preceding week. I think you were but little acquainted with her. She had an ingenuous and good-humoured cheerfulness, that engaged our affection;—a certain naiveté,

that made her very foibles agreeable. She was, personally, rather tall, feminine and fair, with a soft sweetness in her eyes and smile. She sung agreeably, and her disposition was generous and charitable. If, instead of the spoiled-child indulgence lavished upon her by her late mother, and which made her indolent and a little capricious, she had received a judicious education, she would have been above the general level, both in understanding and merit. The excessive affection she had always felt for her sister, married some three years since, excited an energy of exertion not natural to her, and more than her strength was perhaps calculated to endure, in nursing her all summer, through a long and dangerous illness. From that illness Mrs Simmons is now recovering. Miss Hinckley drank tea with her friend, Mrs T. White, on Sunday fortnight—was uncommonly cheerful; —eat an hearty supper on returning to her brother's;—went laughing up stairs to bed at eleven; —seized, while undressing, with a violent pain in her bowels. It soon increased to agony,—and she died between four and five: her age, 38.

Alas! what a violent wrench from meridian life, the pleasures of health, and the indulgent kindness of a generous brother and of numerous friends! Since her sister's marriage, she used to

be often with me. Her society was pleasant, and I shall long regret her loss.

Alas! how frequently do events like these recal to our recollection that striking passage in our sublime and favourite poet!

> "There's no prerogative in human hours;
> In human hearts, what bolder thought can rise,
> Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?"

Mr Saville called upon me in an hour after my arrival. He imparted this mournful news, which wrapt the remainder of the evening in gloom.

I have just seen Mrs Hinckley. She told me a striking circumstance of this sad event. Immediately on being seized, Miss Hinckley said she felt that she should die. They sent for the apothecary, who made light of the complaint—told them he would send a medicine, and left her. Encouraged by his opinion, her sister-in-law, Mrs Hinckley, whose guest she was, and the two attending servants, ridiculed the conviction, which she continued to express, concerning the fatality of her disease. This was her striking reply: "Sister, I I have seen something.—You saw it not, but I saw it.—What must be, must be." Mrs Hinckley observed, that these words shocked her with their resemblance to the passage of solemn beauty in Tickell's ballad:—

"I hear a voice, you cannot hear,
Which says, I must not stay;
I see a hand, you cannot see,
Which beckons me away."

Poor Miss Hinckley used to be fond of that little poem. Those lines probably occurred to her with a sort of delirious impression, and produced an imaginary spectre.

So far of my letter was written last night,—it proved a very disturbed one. The sulphureous atmosphere, which produces thunder, always makes me ill, affecting my respiration, and rendering me feverish. Such I found myself after supper; yet, thus late in the year, little suspected the cause; that summer-tempest would shake "the sear and yellow leaves." After lying wakeful and disordered, from eleven till two, I fell asleep, and was awakened about three with the roar of violent thunder, and with flashes of vivid lightning. My maids, knowing my terrors, came to me. Thank God the storm did not last long. I have lain late this morning and risen unwell; but the day clears up, and I revive. Hope you do not suffer, like myself, both in body and spirit, from an inflamed and pealing horizon.

Adieu! love to Mrs Puliston of Bryn-y-Funau, to Miss Carol, to Mr Hayman, to the dear little ones. Ah Wales! by how many vestiges of re-

membered kindness art thou endeared to my heart!

LETTER XXIII.

Mrs Mary Powys.

Lichfield, Nov. 17, 1795.

We are in the same situation, dear friend,—perpetually forced into long reluctant silences to each other, and to many besides who are dear to us. It is only a month since I received your last, bearing the long date of August the 20th. When it arrived, I had recently set out for Wales. My health and spirits needed much every restorative they could obtain from changed air, mountain-gales, coast-residence, and abstinence from the pen, with exemption also from the uneasy consciousness of not fulfilling the claims made upon its exertion. Therefore I left orders that no letters, arriving in my absence, should be sent after me, but wait my return. Thus yours, with almost twenty others, remained some weeks unopened in my house.

Your excursions to Ireland by Holyhead, have

familiarized you with the Claude-landscapes of Langollen's Vales. I lived at Mr Roberts' house a fortnight of this absence, situate on a bold mountain that rises amidst their scenes. On my road thither, I passed four days with your friends, Mr and Mrs and Miss Wingfields in Shrewsbury—breathing many a sigh, as I passed and repassed the venerable Abbey-walls—your native walls—scene of your infant sports—haunts of your youth—within whose bounds I passed with you many a day of interest and delight, that passed swiftly on in the brighter years of life and friendship;—my mind previously strung to the keenest sense of these yearnings, by the inexpressible, yet to you perfectly conceivable sensations which arose in my heart, on travelling under the park walls of Weston:—sad, sacred spot!

From Mr Roberts' I went to Barmouth, distant thence about fifty miles. What landscapes, matchless surely on this island, did those fifty miles exhibit! Barmouth is in the bay of Cardigan. I staid there a month, almost baked by the intense heat of the weather, and of the situation; for into that western bay, concaved by vast mountains, western winds only can blow, while every apartment of the lodging-houses have the same aspect, so oppressive when the sun flames in a sultry horizon. I had scarcely a day's health

while I staid there, and, thank God, have scarcely known a day's illness since I returned home. One has heard of the after-benefits received from excursions. I hope I may flatter myself with having obtained that ensuing good; but really, at Barmouth, the ocean-breezes, passing over a bed of burning sand, that intervenes between the town and the sea, seemed the Sirocco gales of Italy. The semicircular mountains are high, but barren, and somewhat monotonous. An half mile's walk up the turnpike road, cut in the rocks, conducts us to scenery, great beyond all I had seen, and totally unlike every other prospect that had met my eye. It continues, in unabated and varied grandeur, to Dolgelly, a ten-mile stage, and which I had travelled in darkness and peril extreme; but I repassed it, on my return, beneath a bright morning sun. Its peculiar features are formed by an estuary of the sea, breaking in amongst rocks and mountains, immense in their elevation, and tumbled about in magnificent disorder; some richly curtained with foliage, and others bare; the water, when the tide is up, forming apparent lakes amongst them, which exceed the boasted grandeur of Ulswater, as I was assured by a gentleman of accurate observation, who had seen both countries. From Dolgelly to Langollen, romantic

beauty assumes softer features, profusely uniting sylvan luxuriance to mountainous sublimity.

This excursion has given me the honour and happiness of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby's friendship, the celebrated Recluses of Langollen Vale. Their retreat, as you have doubtless heard, if you have not seen it, is a little temple, consecrate to Friendship and the Muses, and adorned by the hands of all the Graces. Their lawns and bowers breathe the same spirit of consummate elegance. They are women of genius, taste, and knowledge,—sought, in their beauteous retirement, by the great, the literary, and the ingenious. Devoted to each other, their expanded hearts have yet room for other warm attachments. Mrs Powys of Berwick stands high in their esteem, and they have known her long. They assure me, that the uncommon beauty of her face, the pensive and expressive sentiment of her countenance, and the serene grace of her majestic and fine form, exactly delineate the intelligent mind and feeling heart that animate them. The elegant style of her letters, with one of which she has honoured me, confirm their high praise of her understanding. Nor can I doubt that she equally merits their glowing eulogium on her virtues. They tell me that the envy, always excited by her

superiorities, and of late more inflamed by the high connection she has made for her lovely daughter, Lady Fielding, has made her a few industrious foes amongst the ladies of her vicinity, some of them villifying and shunning her. Ah! they would do better to imitate the condescending sweetness they so little resemble.

Lady Eleanor and Miss Ponsonby anxiously inquired if you, and this your beauteous cousin, were on terms of amity. I told them that I did not recollect to have heard you mention Mrs Powys, except in general terms. They observed, that she always spoke of you with much regard.

What a charming description your last letter gives me of Sandgate, on the Kentish coast. How rarely, as there, do trees and flowers luxuriantly adorn the ocean's side. A poet has asked,

> "Who seeks to pluck the fragrant rose,
> From the bare heath, or oozy beach?"

—but the beach of Sandgate shows us roses. I hope its fine air and bathing restored your friend Miss Hardy's health, whom you so kindly accompanied thither, and so assiduously nursed. Well do I know the generous energy of your attentions on occasions like these;—indeed on all occasions where friendship needs them.

I heard much in Shropshire of Miss Louisa S.'s beauty and graces; of the conquest they had seemed to make of Mr P.'s heart. Does time barb the shaft?—and will he seek balm for its wound at the altar of Hymen? Adieu!

LETTER XXIV.

J. WHYTE, ESQ. of Dublin *.

SIR, *Lichfield, Nov.* 27, 1795.

You have done me a great deal of honour. From the time I received your ingenious present, I have waited for an opportunity of sending you my acknowledgments by a private conveyance; yet, though I frequently see persons travelling from hence into Ireland, the desired chance has not, in the interim, been mine, and I grow impatient of appearing ungrateful.

The verses, entitled Lichfield, in this volume, compliment me with partial elegance. I wish my talents possessed, in reality, those powers you

* On receiving from him a present of his poems, in one volume, printed by Marchbanks at Dublin, in the year 1792.—*S.*

so gallantly impute to them, of supporting the intellectual glory of this my darling city;—haunt of my youth, and endeared to me by tender vestiges of the long-beloved and now everlastingly absent.

I consider my absence from Lichfield unlucky, when, in August 1788, you favoured me with a visit. I was then in Derbyshire at a music-meeting. That fortnight's excursion, and one other of a month's duration, were the only times that filial duty could allow me to leave home from the year 1786 till 1790—when my willing fetters were mournfully and for ever broken.

Your muse has entwined another wreath for mine in the collateral eulogium on dear Major Andre's monody. I am gratified that the tribute of my true friendship for him, and for his yet dearer Honora, is poetically pleasing to you. Praise meets an animated welcome, "when those applaud us who themselves excel."

It jars me to find the beautiful Churchyard of Gray not an original composition. I cannot doubt your evidence; yet surely it had better have been suppressed, unless the title of the work alluded to, as its model, had been recollected. The late Mr T. Warton, in his finely critical edition of Milton's lesser poems, proves that the plan, and nearly all the descriptions of Allegro, Il Penseroso,

were taken from the older poet Browne—but then he gives us the rude block from which these Phidian statues were carved. That should always be done when plagiarism is charged upon a great author. Respecting Parnel, you have done so in this volume.—We could not, it is true, enrol him in the list of great poets, even if much his best work, the Hermit, had been his own, and not, as you have evinced, a mere versification.

Great is the fertility of your ideas in the composition of prologue and epilogue; that for the jubilee play-house, is peculiarly my favourite.

Your poem, the Theatre, contains many sweet passages, and involves very just moral, as well as technical satire and admonition, while the notes give us interesting stage-biography. It enables us to see and hear Miss Sheridan's Jane Shore with our mind's organs—to feel the melting graces she displayed in that character. But it grieves me to find in this work no mention of the Siddonian star —that brightest female luminary that ever shone in the dramatic sphere. A Rosciad, published in the year 1792, and that glorious actress not named!!!

I perfectly remember Mrs Cibber and Mrs Pritchard, young as I was when I saw them, in all their capital characters, the last season of their performing. I have the most discriminating re-

collection of their different excellencies. Mrs Cibber had very pathetic powers; her features, though not beautiful, were delicate and very expressive; but she uniformly pitched her silver voice, so sweetly plaintive, in too high a key to produce that endless variety of intonation with which Mrs Siddons declaims.

Mrs Pritchard's voice was clear, distinct, and various; but her figure coarse and large, nor could her features, plain even to hardness, at least when I saw them, exhibit the witchery of expression. She was a just and spirited actress; a more perfectly good speaker than her more elegant, more fascinating contemporary.

Mrs Siddons has all the pathos of Mrs Cibber, with a thousand times more variety in its exertion; and she has the justness of Mrs Pritchard;—while only Garrick's countenance could ever vie with her's in those endless shades of meaning, which almost make her charming voice superfluous; while the fine proportion and majesty of her form, and the beauty of her face, eclipse the remembrance of all her less consummate predecessors.

I scarce know a couplet I like better than one in this poem, of which I am jealously complaining,—thus,

> "The itch of cavil, festering to disease,
> No art can circumbribe, no genius please."

The assertion is so true, and so well expressed!—I said jealously, because I confess that almost as interesting to me as the moral reputation of my friends is the fame of contemporary talents.

I conclude the poem in question was composed before this bright orb attained its zenith;—but, when a good man has made his will, you know it is easy, as new merit comes forward, to add a codicil.

Mrs Yates had something which might be termed the rant of action. I conclude you had her performance in your eye when you satirized dumb-shew, violence which you attribute in general to the actresses of that period. Mrs Barry, now Mrs Crawford, was then a very pleasing and just performer, in her prime, and utterly exempt from rant of any kind, and yet you there make no exception in her favour. It is unfortunate that a poem should appear, which declares that not vain were the fears of the Tragic Muse, that, when Pritchard and Cibber were lost to her, she should never behold their equals; that it should appear at the very period when our stage boasts an actress who unites their different excellencies, in a degree superior to them both. In the conclusion of your poem, you should have made your palinode in justice to her transcendence.

The poem, entitled the Nosegay, like the orange

tree, bears fruits and flowers at once—the flowers of compliment, and the fruits of monitory instruction.

Your muse is elegantly dressed as a birth-night belle. She would have been yet more welcome to me in a plain blue gown, with only her intrinsic charms, as being less costly to her parent.

When circumstances shall again lead you, or any of your family, through this city, I hope, from being fortunately at home, to express, *viva voce*, my sense of your attention to me. Meantime, and always, recollection shall cherish its impression.—I have the honour to be, Sir, &c.

LETTER XXV.

Rev. T. S. Whalley.

Lichfield, Nov. 30, 1795.

I am happy to find, through floral correspondence, that my dear friends, on their beauteous mountain, were recently well and cheerful.

So lately as you preceded me in North-Wales, both in scenery and society, I shall say little to you of a tour which gratified every wish I could

form as to both;—not even of the vale of vales, thrice consecrated;—in the thirteenth century, by patriot glory and Petrarchan love—in our day, by virgin friendship—realizing all one has read of romantic elegance, dignified by knowledge and virtue. I cannot doubt your having explored all those curious vestiges of love and valour in ages past, with which the vale abounds, and which are so interesting to the poet and the antiquarian.

During my visit to Mrs Price at Emral, she told me with what warm partiality you had mentioned me to her; and I found the same generous efforts to inspire prepossession in my favour operating in the kind and friendly attentions I received from Mr and Mrs Fletcher, amidst the Mesopotamian plains of Gwemheylid; from Mr and Mrs Parry, in their beautiful villa in the green and narrow vale of Gresford, winding away with its steep rocks and pellucid river, roaring and frothing through a rocky channel; from Mrs Eleanor Warrington, in her cottage, on the nearer brink, and on the graceful bend of that dinning river, in Gresford valley.—We dined with her, and in a large party. There I saw, for a short time, your beautiful friend, Mrs Ross, and received several benign glances from her bright dark eyes, ere she announced herself to me as your friend.

Mrs E. Warrington's abode, plain, in its elegant

neatness, is, in the exterior appearance, the most consistently a cottage of any I have seen, that take the name—or rather, from having no second story, it looks like a cluster of cottages. For a scene, to visit rather than to live in, it has the most romantic fascination. The green sloping bank, of lawny smoothness, on which we step from the folding doors of the parlour, with its weeping willow, whose pendant branches almost dip in the dashing river, forms a picture of cool sequestration, delightfully associated with the perception, or the idea of summer sultriness. From the noise of its waters, I could fancy it the resounding house of Albunea, the abode of Horace, and consecrated by his lyre. Mr Roberts' situation would please you more, "high on a lofty mountain's airy brow."

I met also your engaging friends, the Miss Warringtons, at a rural dinner, amid the ruins of Valle-Crucis abbey. Arm in arm, as we walked through that impressive scene, you and Mrs Whalley were our frequent theme. What a miraculous talent for painting does one of those fine young women possess!—uninstructed, to be able to copy one of the most capital of Angelica's pictures, the sleeping Penelope, with a fidelity that astonishes! I first saw the original at Mr Parry's, in Gresford valley, and Miss W.'s copy at Sir Foster Cunliffe's.

What engaging manners has Mrs Parry!—I am sure you admire my long-admired, long-beloved Lady Cunliffe.

O Mr Whalley, how perilous are the times! If I am disgusted with ministry, for their insane persistence in a war that has long been unmotived, and ruinous to this country, I am still more indignant at the Catilines of the minority, who are seeking to plunge the nation in all the horrors of anarchy, by their gross misrepresentations of a bill, now absolutely necessary, to prevent the farther spreading of the pestilential taint of republican principles amidst the undiscerning vulgar;—necessary to save us from the ruins and horrors in which France is plunged. I tremble for the event, though our prospects brighten in the east, and though the demon-legions are repulsed in Germany. Farewell!

LETTER XXVI.

Right Hon. Lady Eleanor Butler.

Lichfield, Dec. 9, 1795.

Before I speak to you, dearest Lady Eleanor, of the contents of your thrice-gratifying, thrice-beautiful letter, suffer me to present my thanks for a bounteous present of fruit-trees. They will will be the pride of my garden, and I shall watch their growth with solicitude, as the pledges of an highly-prized friendship.

I rejoice that my poem, on Langollen Vale, meets a reception of such partial warmth from the bright spirits it celebrates, and whose praise I more desire for it than fame; yet am I conscious how largely that praise transcends its merit. I believe its poetic stamina are not weaker than those of the best of my writings; my utmost hope, as to its essential merit, "has that extent,—no more:" —but indeed, indeed, none of my compositions have any pretence to vie with the Darwinian muse, in the splendours of imagination.

I am sorry that only *my* two essays on Richardson's Clarissa please you, in the collection entitled

Variety. The generality of them appear to me agreeable, amusing, animated; by no means without interest, or deficient in wit and humour, though not of fascinating eloquence: I thought them on a level with the papers of the Spectator. I have ever considered those as greatly over-praised and over-rated as works of genius, of which I cannot perceive that they contain any very bright emanations.

O! certainly Johnson's quotation, in his folio Dictionary, under the word rhyme, from Dryden, to the disparagement of Milton, is of the same complexion with his citing the evident burlesque, the Tetrachordon Sonnet, as a specimen of that great poet's manner of writing sonnets;—but the injustice, in the former instance, is not so broad and enormous as in the latter. Dryden probably disliked Milton for the censurable superciliousness with which he had called him, "the man of rhyme;" but Dryden's dislike had not the bitterness of Johnson's, because he was a better-tempered man. Neither had Johnson's aversion the excuse of piqued pride and personal soreness.—He hated the man for his party, and his poetry for its pre-eminence. Of blank verse, of odes, and of sonnets, he omits no occasion of speaking disdainfully, without making any exception in favour of Milton; and, for that author's writings in the cou-

plet rhyme, he was glad to quote the idle censure of Dryden. What then, as a poet, did he leave him? To be sure, when, in writing the life of that transcendent writer, he was obliged to review the Paradise Lost, he durst not, with all his effrontery, withhold a considerable portion of praise: —but he praises Milton under the eye of the public as Pistol eat his leek under that of Fluellen. After all, he endeavours to do away, collectively, all his reluctant praise of that glorious and beautiful poem, by observing, that no person closes its pages with the desire of recurring to them; —that its perusal is always a task, never a pleasure—or to that effect. A self-evident, I could almost say an impudent falsehood; since there can be no inducement to resume a work of imagination in our native language, the perusal of which had afforded us no delight, but had inspired only weariness; therefore, if Johnson's assertion was not a falsehood, no one would look twice into Milton's Paradise Lost—with which, in fact, every person of poetic taste is familiar.

I am flattered extremely by the conviction you express, that my centenary of sonnets, and which form a sort of compendium of my sentiments, opinions, and impressions, during the course of more than twenty years, would be acceptable to the public;—but I have always felt a reluctance in

giving my writings in form to the world. Some stronger stimulus than the uncertain hope of its favour, was always necessary to conquer this procrastinating tardiness. I certainly mean they should one day appear. I know their poetic worth, and dare trust their fame to posterity;—assured that the Gothic mantle, now spread over poetic taste, will be cast away in time to come. Few people, at this period, respect the Muses; and this consciousness makes me feel unwilling to expose myself to the mortification of press-errors, and to the spleen of my personal enemies, venting itself in anonymous criticism.

My Memoir of the Peak Minstrel, and poem addressed to him, in the Gentleman's Magazine for March 1785, have had the honour to interest you and your charming friend in his destiny, and suggested your inquiry into his present situation. At the time that memoir and poem were written, or very soon after, he was articled for seven years, upon a salary of L. 50 per annum, as machinery-carpenter in a cotton-mill, in beauteous Monsaldale, Derbyshire. Two years after, the mill was burnt, and he with difficulty escaped from its sudden and midnight conflagration. His tools, purchased gradually, and which cost him L. 30, were consumed.—He was refused any compensation for them. Thus, with a wife and two

children, he had the world to begin again. I procured a few guineas for their present support.

That accident, which seemed so ruinous, will, I trust, prove the means of making his fortune. His known ingenuity in mechanics, his industry and fair moral character, induced some monied people, who were going to erect a cotton-mill in that neighbourhood, but, alas! in a situation dreary as the former was Edenic, to offer to admit him third partner, if he would undertake to construct its machinery, keep it in order, and could advance L. 200 to the common-stock. An old godmother of his, who had boarded with his wife some years, and experienced from him the kindness of filial attention, sold, for this purpose, houses, which were her sole support, and which produced L. 150. I lent him the remaining L. 50, and he re-embarked in business, in the respectable station of cotton-manufacturer. The mill, to which he belongs, stood, amidst the commercial wreck of so many great houses in Manchester, about two years ago. All the Peak mills supply that town. A little before that dangerous crisis, he wrote to me that he had realized a thousand pounds in the concern;—a great sum for the short time he had been engaged in it. I find they are now going on very prosperously.

But for the destruction of the Monsaldale-mill, he would not have been at liberty to accept the advantageous proposals made to him. Yet, when that sad accident happened, he bewailed it as ruinous.

" Oft from imagined ills our blessings flow."

I have just read Madame Roland's interesting Memoirs and Letters. The third volume contains some strange indelicacies, similar to those in Rousseau's Confessions. Of very recent publication, probably they may not have reached Langollen Vale. She was a most extraordinary woman; of a great comprehensive mind, and affectionate heart, and her husband one of the few really virtuous characters of the revolution. How severely did they both suffer from the chimerical plan of liberty they supported and propagated!—a plan which, except it found men angels, must make them demons. Of that truth they were soon fatally convinced, and to its force these Memoirs bear frequent testimony. O! what new scenes of unprecedented barbarity do they disclose, and which, as Madame Roland herself observes, far transcend the annals of Tiberius Cæsar's reign!

Her third volume wears an air of vanity, which lowers her a little, and that from the number, minuteness, and length of details, which relate solely to the years of her infancy. A few of them would have been welcome. Those whom great characters interest, love to look at the dawn of so bright an intellectual day—but she keeps us out too long before breakfast.

New warnings to England glare broad through these Memoirs. God forbid they should be vain! Yet our Catilines, to obtain the seat of rule for an interval, are straining every nerve to pull eventual destruction upon their own heads, after ruining their country.

Had Roland and his wife seen, as we have seen, the miseries resulting from an overturned empire, and from democratic sway, their virtue would have prevented their disseminating those ideas and principles, to which such numbers of wretched people have, with themselves, been sacrificed. This work, however, has taught me to believe the murdered king more blameable than I supposed;—that if he had acted sincerely, he might yet have been a monarch, with limited powers, and saved his people from the miseries of lawless disorganization, under the idiot name of equality.

In the description of Madame Roland's person, on the day of her execution, we have a curious instance of that want of veracity for which Frenchmen have been always notorious. She tells us herself, that her height was precisely five feet, and that her eyes were small and of a greyish hue. Her describer says, she was tall and majestic, with eyes large and black, &c.

We had a charming public concert last week, at which Mr Saville favoured the company with one song, of never-excelled grace and power. It was a tender amoroso air, succeeded by a disdainful bravura. It is set by Bach, and quite an opera song.

Most of us felt the earthquake in our little city, but few, at the instant, knew what it was. Happily for England, those dread convulsions of the earth, which, on the continent, disroot rocks, overturn mountains, tilt oceans on the shores, as water poured from a basin, and swallow up whole cities,—

"But gently vibrate on her grassy bosom."

I have the honour to remain, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

DAVID SAMWELL, ESQ.

Lichfield, Dec. 12, 1795.

SINCE you are so soon again to trust the faithless seas, I cannot suffer you to re-embark without receiving my thanks for the animated and obliging letter before me. Rays of genius play over the paper; an illumination which your epistles never want.

I am not insensible of the honour you do my Ode to the Sun. Your quotation of one of its lines is most ingeniously apposite. Highly interesting is the description of your wanderings in the water:

> " There where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls,
> Boils round the naked melancholy isles
> Of farthest Thule, and the Atlantic surge
> Pours in among the stormy Hebrides."

The distant excursions of a classic spirit, either on land or water, are pregnant with delights, untasted by ordinary minds;—delights which are neither grudged nor envied, because such minds know not

what they lose. The deaf deplore the loss of social conversation, and think how blest those must be who enjoy it; the blind sigh over the happiness of the heirs of light: and to both those classes of the unfortunate, deprivation becomes a telescope of very magnifying power;—but mere common-sense, if it looks at all at the pleasures of imagination, and the resources of knowledge, views them through that telescope reversed, which diminishes them almost to nothing.

You say your New-Year's Ode incapacitates you for the laureateship, upon your fitness for which the reviewers compliment you, breathing, as it does, nothing but liberty. As the friend of humankind, do you not shudder at pronouncing a word which has been prostituted to such direful purposes? Never were tyranny and slavery carried to such wild extreme as since that fatal sound has been the howl of anarchy, and the watchword of murder.

Certainly our continuation of the war on the continent, so long after it became hopeless, has been a woful Quixotism for England.—Yet, much as I blame ministers for such an evident waste of English blood and treasure, they are spotless in comparison of those unwarned madmen, who seek to plunge this island in the guilt and miseries of infuriate France.

I have not seen, nor, till you mentioned it to me, heard of the imitation of Sterne by a German writer. I should think that coy, that volatile, and exquisite spirit, so difficult to be caught by imitators, had little chance of flowing pure through a German pen, and afterwards to us through the flattering medium of a translation. Admiring Sterne, I have an aversion to see his peculiar manner aped. As to the passage* you cited from this German work—a *dog* is a noble-natured animal; if the French had partaken, in the least degree, of his kind and generous disposition, they could not have thus vilely massacred each other. Trim disgraced the dog, and not the Frenchman, by the appellation.

I write to you on my birth-day; and every moment expect a set of friends to keep it with me. A knock at the door announces the arrival of some of them. I wish you could be transported into our circle; and I solicitously wish you a safe and prosperous voyage: as for impossible wishes, like the former, they can have no *solicitude*.

* Trim gave a lame French soldier a penny, with the addition,—"you French dog." Uncle Toby turned round and observed, "Trim, he is a man, and not a dog."—*S.*

LETTER XXVIII.

Miss Ponsonby.

Lichfield, Dec. 29, 1795.

The energy and speed of your exertion, in procuring the solicited drawing, has all my gratitude. Ah! on how many occasions, in that short interval, since I had the honour and happiness of waiting upon you and Lady Eleanor, have I felt the sense of obligation!

My foot has been some days restored to soundness, and allowed me to resume my daily walks, beneath the mild skies of a winter hitherto uncommonly temperate. These walks, after a fortnight's total confinement, are taken with a pleasure resembling that of a bird escaped from its wiry prison, when it finds its liberty and its wings.

Yes, I will not fail to watch the Orocus Bergamot pear-tree, in my garden-wanderings; though I am, myself, too ignorant of horticulture to be a judge of its progress. Contented hitherto with seeing my grass smooth and vivid, and my flowers gay, I thought little of the fruit-trees, to whose

luxuriance the rocky, and, I believe, rubbishy soil, below the surface, has proved very inauspicious. Now that your and Lady Eleanor's bounty have annexed, in my ideas, vegetation and sentiment, I shall become impatient of a defect to which I used to be right stoical. My pear-trees, however, have generally, by their fruitfulness, seemed to deride the niggard soil; so I have good hopes of the brocus.

Justly do you observe, that the closing year has yet scarcely taught us "its solemn lesson." The honour you did my Sonnet on Winter, by quoting one of its lines, is not lost upon me. Quotation is at once the highest, and most delicate kind of praise our writings can receive—that only excepted which Lady E. tells me you purpose to confer upon mine. When I consider how much time, and time so precious, must be employed in such a task, I vainly wish for them a degree of excellence proportioned to such eminent distinction.

I thank you for transcribing the article from Chambers's Encyclopedia on the word Sonnet. It ascertains, clearly enough, the rules respecting the return of the rhymes, &c. which render it regular, or, as it is termed, legitimate; but where the constituents of its perfection are attempted to be defined, I was astonished at the stupidity of the

critic, till Mr White informed me, that the late Dr Kippis was one of the editors of that work. I knew that he had many years filled the department of poetic critic in the Monthly Review, successor to the enlightened, elegant, and candid Bently. From the manner in which I had repeatedly seen Kippis executing that office, resulted a conviction of his utter incompetency to judge of English poetry; a power which the study of the Greek and Latin classics will not give, unless an at least equal portion of time and attention is bestowed upon the English poets. It was alike evident, from the praise and censures of Kippis in the Monthly Review, that he possessed no native sensibility of poetic powers and graces in this language;—no scientific consciousness of those essentials which form poetic excellence;—no familiarity with the works of our sublimest bards. Therefore my wonder ceased at the definition, in the Encyclopedia, of sonnet-beauty, and at its Midas preference amongst the sonnets of Milton. He tells us a good sonnet must end with some pretty ingenious thought, and the close must be particularly beautiful, or the sonnet is defective. If he had ever attended to the subject, upon which he so arrogantly and so emptily decides, he would have known, that the legitimate sonnet generally consists of one thought, regular-

ly pursued to the close; and that nothing can be less necessary, indeed more improper, than a new or detached thought for the conclusion; and that brilliance, epigrammatic turn or point, belong not to that species of composition; which, notwithstanding the lightness of its name, is of rather a grave and severe character. An harmonious and impressive close, provided it be not epigrammatic or detached, but connected with the subject, must be an advantage. Yet, since the best of Milton's sonnets are models for this order of verse in our language, their practice demonstrates, that a quiet unornamented close is not inconsistent with its excellence. Those three, which are incomparably the finest of Milton's, finish with serene simplicity, viz. that sublime sonnet on the Piedmont massacre;—that majestic exhortation to the soldier to spare his dwelling, in which we participate so forcibly with the delight the great poet must have felt from the consciousness there expressed of the fulness of his power to reward the protection he solicits;—that to Mr Lawrence, which, in the compass of fourteen lines, presents a winter and summer landscape; a festal board, surrounded with a knot of literary friends, a concert, and an important philosophic observation. Nor only these three, but nearly all the rest close

with sobriety:—so closes the favourite sonnet of the sage Encyclopædia critic,—that addressed to Mr H. Laws, and which, he tells us, is one of Milton's best: and, lo! it contains not one image, not one sentiment, has no magic of versification, and is utterly unworthy to have proceeded from the pen of Milton. So much for Dr Kippis' judgment concerning the *indispensable* in sonnet excellence;—so much for his taste respecting selection.

He is talking of Milton's English sonnets, and he tells us there are twenty-three,—forgetting that five of Milton's sonnets are Italian, which reduces the number of the English ones to eighteen. Of these eighteen, four are wretched. The Tetrachordon is evident burlesque, written in sport—but it is the sport of an elephant, heavy, and clumsy. That to Sir H. Vane, and that to Lady M. Lee, and the *selected* to H. Laws, are of curious infelicity.

Mr Cary has honoured my poem on Langollen Vale, which I read to him, with a very beautiful and strictly regular sonnet. Behold it—

Dova, when next my vagrant steps explore
The haunts romantic, where thy silver streams,
On which the garish sun but seldom gleams,
Fill, with their wild and fancy soothing roar,

Langollen's verdant straits, and mountains hoar,
How shall I dwell enraptur'd on the themes,
That now the immortal muse of Britain deems
Worthy her sacred scroll, unmark'd before;
The steeds whose fetlocks swam in blood;—the host
Of Glendour, claiming valour's brightest meed;
Hoel's love-breathing harp, and lays divine;
And the fair wanderers from Icrne's coast,
Who, to fond Friendship's gentle power decreed,
Rear in this watery vale their simple shrine.

It may be old-fashioned to send Christmas compliments; yet the wish of my heart will not be restrained for many, very many, happy returns of this season to yourself and Lady Eleanor —this season, in which, the divine Shakespeare tells us,

"The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
No ghost can walk, no witch hath power to harm,
So hallow'd, and so gracious is the time."

I awoke at six on Christmas-day; and, on hearing the cocks of the neighbourhood cheerily answering each other, recollected that passage with thrills of delight. It chased the mists of slumber, so I rang for my fire and arose. My dressing-room windows look upon the cathedral area, which is a green lawn, encircled by prebendal houses, and they are rough-cast. The glimmer

of the scene, through the dusk of a December morning at seven, produced the following sonnet, several years ago, from my pen:

I love to rise ere breaks the tardy light,
Winter's pale day; and, as clear fires illume,
And cheerful tapers shine around the room,
Through misty windows bend my musing sight
Where, round the dusky lawn, the mansions white,
With shutters clos'd, peer faintly through the gloom,
That slow recedes; while yon grey spires assume,
Rising from their dark pile, an added height,
By indistinctness given;—then to decree
The rising thoughts to Heaven, ere they unfold
To Friendship, or the Muse; or seize with glee
Wisdom's rich page!—O hours, more worth than gold,
By whose blest use we lengthen life, and, flee
From drear decays of age, outlive the old!

I remain, with the most perfect esteem, dearest Madam, &c.

LETTER XXIX.

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER.

Lichfield, Feb. 4, 1796.

I HAVE now the honour of addressing immediately to your Ladyship, those acknowledgments for your late obliging letter, which, on the evening I received it, were presented in the close of a long epistle to Miss Ponsonby.

Nothing can be more just than your observation upon the power of lovely scenery to meliorate sorrow. The second sonnet in the Langollen-Vale publication is expressly on that subject. Dark, indeed, must be the anguish, that pure air and beautiful landscape cannot pervade and illume. Milton observes, that they breathe into the senses

> "Vernal delight and joy; able to sooth
> All sorrow, but despair."

So you have farming improvements on your hands at present. Thrice-flattering to me is the observation interwoven with that intelligence. You, I am sure, will unite the *dulce* with the *utile*. Beneath the wand of the enchantresses

Beauty starts up in her own form divine, as Satanic grandeur did beneath the spear of Ithuriel.

I have already expressed to Miss Ponsonby my delight in the scenic fidelity, and elegant execution of the vignette for Langollen Vale; but I cannot cease to feel pain, in the idea that my receiving it as yours and Miss Ponsonby's present, must render the publication so expensive to you. If you will have the goodness to permit me to discharge the engraver's bill, you will extremely oblige me. The kind trouble you took in procuring the drawing at my wish, and placing it in such able hands, is an obligation which I can cheerfully receive. It is yet in your power to render that pleasure unallayed.

It gratifies me, that your Ladyship's and Miss Ponsonby's ideas are similar to mine on Mrs Radcliffe's Tour. I was assured you would be peculiarly impressed by the description of Hardwicke, of the Lakes, and by the sombre picture of the solitary tide-man, passing his cheerless life on the edge of lonely seas. Nor less striking the descriptions of the waste desolation this ruinous war has produced in Germany. The political observations are not many, but they are just and pointed.

Certainly no female author ever produced to the world such indelicacies as disgrace a few pages

of Madame Roland's Memoirs. They are exactly similar to some of Rousseau's Confessions;—but we are more impatient of them from the pen of a woman. Upon the whole, the work is very interesting; and we forget, as it proceeds, the philosophic indecencies even of a woman, whose energies of mind and conduct are so estimable, and amidst the much important and awakening matter which she imparts. It is also but justice to acknowledge, that the gross communications have no immoral tendency.

When speaking of Mrs Radcliffe's Tour, I forgot to observe the probability that the impressions left on the author's imagination, by the local vestiges at Hardwicke of the unfortunate Mary Stewart;—the bed and chairs, worked by her own fingers;—the little confessional, and prayer-book, all preserved exactly as she left them:—that these objects suggested to Mrs R. the idea of the marchioness's apartment in the Mysteries of Udolpho. I thought that scene much the finest and best imagined part of the novel.

Conscious as I am of the great popularity of Miss Burney's pen, the unheard-of brilliance of her subscription-views surprises me. My opinion on the subject of her talents, eminent as they are, in a great degree meets yours and Miss Ponsonby's. There is more fascination for my fancy

and my feelings, in Mrs Brookes's Lady Catesby, Excursion, and Emily Montague, in Sidney Biddulph, in Caroline de Litchfield, in Julia de Roubigné, in the Simple Story, and even in the wild extravagancies of the Mysteries of Udolpho, than in the mild Evelina, or the rigid Cecilia. As to Richardson and Fielding, they sit exalted above all the novel tribe in approachless excellence.

I am sorry for the intelligence you send me of ——'s likelihood to become a senator. The life-long sedition of his principles; his corrupt heart, and oratoric talents, will render him the Belial of the conclave;—except commencing public speaker so late, his natural audacity may possibly not be able to counterbalance the embarrassment of long disuse.

Adieu, dearest Madam! Have the goodness to present my compliments to Miss Ponsonby, and to believe me always your Ladyship's devoted servant.

LETTER XXX.

EDMUND WIGLEY, ESQ. M. P.

Lichfield, Feb. 11, 1796.

AGAIN do I avail myself of your kindly-offered indulgence, requesting you to frank the enclosed.

Mr Hayley's elegy on Sir William Jones has disappointed me; it wants his accustomed graceful ease and harmonious flow. Many of the phrases are oddly prosaic; the metaphors are sometimes broken by an intermixture of literal expressions, such as, "at once to wound, and to console thy heart," instead of—"at once to wound and heal thy anxious heart,"—or, "at once to grieve and to console thy heart."—And again, "The quicksand where many a son of lettered fame has died," instead of *perished* or *been wrecked*. The epithets applied to the Deceased have often a coaxing effeminacy, that would proceed better from a lover bewailing his mistress, or a parent his child, than from a celebrated literary character, paying tribute to the manes of congenial excellence.

But with Mr Hayley's Life of Milton I am delighted. It is a great and valuable work; clear-

ing, not by conjecture, opinion, and declamation only, but by irrefragable testimony, the moral reputation of our immortal poet, from every cloud which the malignant slanders of Dr Johnson had thrown upon its genuine and exalted purity.

I could wish, however, that Milton's able defender had been more sparing of those sugar-plumbs about Johnson's supposed goodness and greatness of mind, which he is continually giving the idolaters of that author, before he administers the dose that expels the poison of false-witness against Milton; since with such false-witness goodness and greatness of heart are incompatible. The fruitless endeavour to reconcile them, gives an air of cowardice, which lessens the dignity of a fine writer, producing truths in vindication of injured virtue.

I am not charmed with the dedication to Dr Warton, prefixed to the Life of Milton. That coaxing familiarity of style seems to me unbecoming in a dedication, especially from a so much younger man to a literary veteran. Friends should not coax each other before the world;—or if they do, it should be with an air of serious respect, that gives importance and dignity to endearment.

Salutary, I trust, to your own and Mrs Wigley's health, proves the late and present mildness of the winter. That of 1779 had equal softness,

" When on old Hyems' chill and icy crown,
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Was, as in mockery, set!"

Adieu.

LETTER XXXI.

Mr Laugh, of the Dewar Club *, at the Hope, Mitre Court.

Sir, *Lichfield, Feb.* 14, 1796.

The majority are certainly right in this dispute about the meaning of the epitaph on Johnson.

* A literary society, often frequented by Dr Johnson, in which a dispute had arisen concerning the meaning of the epitaph on him, which appeared in the beginning of this month, in several of the newspapers, with A. Seward's *signature*, most unwarrantably given, and which obliged her publicly to disavow the composition. This was the epitaph:

" The groans of Learning tell that Johnson dies.
Adieu, rough critic, of Colossal size!
Grateful, ye virtues, round his grave attend,
And boldly guard your energetic friend!
Ye vices keep aloof—a foe to you!
Yet one, the subtlest of your tribe, he knew;
In silence, Envy, to his fame be just,
And, tho' you stain'd his spirit, spare his dust."

Dazzled by the splendour of his talents, admiration of a stupendous but imperfect Being has misled you;—has warped the judgment of a man of genius to put a forced construction upon a very obvious sense. If it was possible to construe, "he knew envy," as importing his experience of it in others, yet how could the envy of others stain his spirit? If it had been written, "and though you vex'd his spirit, spare his dust," the meaning might have been equivocal; but with the word *stained*, dubious meaning cannot exist.

I have had frequent opportunities of conversing with that wonderful man. Seldom did I listen to him without admiring the great powers of his mind, and feeling concern and pain at the malignance of his disposition. He would sometimes be just to the virtues and literary fame of others, if they had not been praised in the conversation before his opinion was asked:—If they had been previously praised, never. His truth, so needlessly precise in common-life trifles, always yielded to the darkest jealousy I ever knew to exist in the bosom of genius. Johnson's Lives of the Poets, and all the records of his own life and conversation, prove that envy did deeply stain his spirit.

Frank in avowing my sentiments, it has been my fate equally to contend with the prejudiced for and against Dr Johnson; with those who at-

test their faith in the moral and religious perfection of that sublime teacher of perfect morality, I allege proofs from my own experience, and the anecdotes of him which are before the world, that he had overbearing haughtiness of temper, uncharitable prejudices, and envy, which betrayed him into injustice concerning the lettered fame of the celebrated, and the virtues of those who differed from him in politics and religion; all which are incompatible with a uniformly good and noble mind.

With those who deem his writings turgid, elaborate, stiff, and pedantic;—who, as a serious essayist, exalt above him the comparatively feeble Addison;—who deny all degree of excellence to his poetry, and pronounce his taste for the art grovelling and undiscerning;—in short, who deny him every thing intellectually but memory and learning:—against these, I have always maintained, that his powers, and style, in moral declamation, are far superior to Addison's, and indeed to that of every other essayist;—that his compositions are luminous, impressive, and harmonious;—that to them may be fairly imputed the immense improvement in English prose-writing within the last half-century;—that, by Latinizing our language, he has expanded its powers, and

harmonized its sound. I have, indeed, granted that his style has no versatility;—that when he attempts to write in the character of *others*, he always fails;—that in the Lady Pekuah of Rasselas, and the Flavia and Flirtilla of the Rambler, we always, as Mr Burke has observed, see the enormous Johnson in petticoats;—yet have I asserted, that the dignity and grace with which he declaims, when writing on abstract themes, and in his own character—the happiness with which he unites efflorescence and strength in his diction, give him an high place on the list of genius;—that his poetry, if not quite first-rate, is very beautiful;—particularly, that the Vanity of Human Wishes, in which he is only indebted to Juvenal for the general idea, is an exquisite ethic poem, for I can hardly term it a satire, so gracefully does it seem to commiserate the presumptuous desires and rash pursuits of mankind.

To your question, Whom could Johnson envy? I answer, all his superiors in genius, all his equals; in short, at times, every celebrated author, living or dead.

You seem to think he has no superiors.—Great as I deem him, I cannot help feeling that he has superiors, and that in a very large degree, though they will not be found amongst our essayists.

where I acknowledge his pre-eminence. Johnson was a very bright star; yet, to Shakespeare and Milton, he was but as a star to the sun.

Reflect, Sir, coolly, what are the constituent powers of superlative genius, and you will better appreciate its claims, than to assert that Johnson had no superiors. You will confess those powers to be creative fancy,—intuitive discernment into the subtlest recesses of the human heart;—exhaustless variety of style;—the Proteus ability of speaking the sentiments and language of every character, whether belonging to real or to imaginary existence; and that so naturally, as to make the reader feel that so must have spoken every man or woman, angel or fiend, fairy or monster, whose shape is assumed.

If these are the constituent powers of superlative genius, how fades the dazzling lustre of Johnson's talents before that of Shakespeare's and Milton's!

Gray was indolent, and wrote but little;—yet that little proves him the first Genius of the period in which he lived. I have been assured that he had more learning than Johnson, and he certainly was a very superior poet. Johnson felt the superiority, and for that he hated him. It was that consciousness, I verily believe, which impelled him to speak with such audacious contempt of

the first lyric compositions the world has seen, of loftier subjects than Pindar's. Grander in point of imagery and language no odes can be than the odes of Gray.

Johnson's first ambition was to be distinguished as a poet, and as a poet he was first celebrated. His fine satire, London, had considerable reputation; yet it neither eclipsed, nor had power to eclipse, the satires of Pope. As a dramatic poet he failed—the cold Irene, all whose personages speak the same spiritless, unnatural, though polished language, met almost total neglect. Hence originated his spleen to poets; that disappointment laid the train to his indignancy against those, who, in his primeval pursuit, had higher celebrity.

Soon after Dr Johnson's death, one of the first literary characters of this age sent me the epitaph on Johnson, allowing me to send it in his name to Mr Boswell, with leave for its insertion into his life of the despot. I foresaw that such insertion would not suit Boswellian idolatry. It did not, and was suppressed.

Human nature is a strangely mixed composition, and we often see very sullying veins in the brightest intellectual gems. I find nothing irreconcilable to our experience of general nature in the just portrait of Johnson which that epitaph displays.

The author of this epitaph was not personally acquainted with Johnson; had declined opportunities of conversing with him, from the reported tyrannic haughtiness of his manners, which, not meeting with abject submission to his opinions, revenged their opposition by rude retort, so pointed by sarcastic wit, as to have it remembered and circulated. It is not to human credit, but it is true, that the generality of people extremely enjoy, and cherish the remembrance of ill-natured wit, provided themselves have not been its object.

The gentleman in question is the absolute reverse of Johnson, in his generous appreciation of literary and moral excellence, of every species, of every party, and of every faith. Possessing perfect poetic taste himself, and enthusiastic veneration for those beautiful compositions, unworthily depreciated by Johnson's criticisms; too conscious of their author's powers of judging rightly, to think it possible he could so often misrepresent without *designing* to mislead, he has frequently deplored, with me, the narrow jealousy which produced the mischief.

In this gentleman's library I took down the first volume of Johnson's Lives of the Poets, and found, written on the title page, the following striking parody of a passage in Macbeth:

> "The *mind* had spasms, as the *body* had,
> And *these* are of them."

If Johnson was now living, I could wish, for the sake of convincing you, that I had not misrepresented him; that you, the author of the spirited Ode on Mr Fox's Birth-day, could hear that composition mentioned to *him;* that your own ear might witness how inevitably, in times like these, the panegyrist of the leader of opposition would have incurred, from Johnson's lip, the most scurrilous abuse.—Fool and rascal were synonymous terms to *whig*, in his vocabulary.

When you speak of him as above the selfishness of mundane beings, and add, that, "regardless of the efforts of puny individuals, he seemed to move as an inhabitant of a more tranquil orb," the basis of that idea must be the pride, and perhaps policy, with which he disdained to notice every rational, or irrational attack made upon his writings, or his overbearing manners. The fact is, he never would read, or endure to hear them mentioned to him, very rudely silencing whoever presumed but to hint at their existence. This was a prudent effort to secure his tranquillity from the shafts of criticism, whether darted by truth, by folly, or by jealousy; but the pages, even of his blindest worshippers, will shew you that, far from moving in a tranquil orb, his spirit was continually perturbed, his feelings wretched.

With much honour for your abilities, and re-

spect even for the enthusiasm which has clothed the strangely mixed character of my illustrious townsman in ideal perfection, I remain, Sir, &c.

LETTER XXXII.

MISS WINGFIELD.

Lichfield, Feb. 22. 1796.

YOUR silence excited no cold suspicion of diminished regard. I am not apt to suspect, upon trivial circumstances, a cessation of attachment which has been voluntarily avowed by characters complexioned like that of dear Miss Wingfield.

Our winter is indeed mild in the extreme. My memory, a pretty faithful register of times and seasons, presents me with nothing resembling it since 1779, when the rugged despot of the year chose, as now, to walk with a soft step, and place a vernal garland on his brow.

I cannot boast of having lost my bosom-pain. Its return upon the least increased chillness in the atmosphere, makes me apprehend that I am indebted rather to this skiey-lenience, than to any

great decrease in the complaint itself, for having been considerably less annoyed by it than I was last winter. I then literally seemed to feel the invisible darts of those severe frosts, piercing through all the shields of fur and flannel with which I tried to defend my bosom, whenever I turned, even for a moment, from the fire. But the whitloes which, this time twelvemonth, and two years, brought the nails, one by one, off my fingers, have, within the past three months, much more cruelly attacked those of my feet, imprisoning me to my chair or couch during a fortnight, at three different periods. I remained in this "durance vile" near half of the six weeks, in which dear Miss Arden was my guest. Her sprightly converse beguiled the hours of pain and languor.

So much for bodily egotism; and now for a little of the intellectual kind, and then I shall be right glad to get out of the narrow sphere of self.

The three times consecrated vale, by valour, by love, and by friendship, has been the subject of a poem somewhat longer than my Hoyle Lake, which Lord Bagot was so good to compliment with Virgilian elegance of numbers. At the request of the ladies, whose bowers, whose talents, and pursuits, form its most considerable theme, and to avoid the trouble of multiplied transcrip-

tions, I resolved to publish it. You and Lord Bagot will have an early copy.

A fair Honora, of the Bagot family, was "the earth-treading star" at one of our late balls. She is a young bride I find. My foot-imprisonment was then total, and deprived me of the pleasure of seeing her there. I love to look at beauty, and I should have delighted in her beauty for two added reasons—her affinity to you, and for her name's sake.

> "O name! for ever sad, for ever dear.
> Still breath'd in sighs, still ushered by a tear!"

I am sorry for your party-contests, they always lacerate good neighbourhood.

We have balls too, but they come not thick and threefold like yours. I am one of the creatures that love not balls in general, at least such as we have been used to at Lichfield; but I subscribed this winter, because I like the manner in which they are now conducted. Mrs B. Proby, who was a Miss Gresley, does the honours of the evening, as Lady President, with grace and attention; without any foolish display of aristocratic partiality in her civilities, which are equally, and with the true dignity of the gentlewoman, extended to every body. Mr and Mrs Arden of Sutton, and their pretty cousin Miss Venner, come

to the ball of to-morrow evening, and will be my guests. I shall accompany them thither.

I am sorry for Mr ———'s severe illness, and hope its danger is past. From the description I have heard of his person and manners, I do not imagine that a certain beautiful nymph's sympathy and sorrow have been very extreme. She would probably be impatient of any circumstance that might delay the realization of those golden hopes, which such an alliance extends. Ambition has its vexations, but *misery* is reserved for affection only, when its object suffers.

From all you have told me of Miss Pasleys, I shall be sorry when you lose them. Elegant manners and goodness of heart are losses felt in the little society of a provincial town.

Earthquakes and mad-dogs have been the terrible graces of this sky-gentle winter; the latter much the most formidable evil, and so frequent, that every body was afraid to walk the streets. Several people have been bit, and had instant recourse to the knife. I hope success will reward the resolution, and avert the direst calamity imaginable; but the apprehensions, alas! what can avert them? Earthquakes, so terrible in other countries, but slightly jar and momentarily alarm our isle and its inhabitants. Who knows but that we lately experienced may have given us a shove

to the south, which may have produced the present mild season, and may prevent the speedy return of such Hybernal asperities as produced the mischiefs last year, of frost and inundation, pregnant with political as well as climatic misfortune to England?

LETTER XXXIII.

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER.

Lichfield, Feb. 28, 1796.

DEAREST Lady Eleanor,—I know how extensive your correspondence;—how incompetent the time of each fleeting day for the employments allotted to it by energy like yours; and apologies for a few posts delay cannot be necessary to preserve an heart, obliged as mine, from unjust suspicions.

I am glad Mrs ——— appears to you in the same estimable point of view, both as to talents and heart, in which she almost invariably appeared to me during a nearly life-long intimacy.

Mr Mundy's Needwood Forest has ever been

a favourite poem of mine. The chaste fidelity of the descriptions to a beauteous region, with whose scenes I am familiar; the images so original, and so truly *forestian*, if I may be allowed the verbal coinage, make me consider it as the first entirely local poem in our language. What pity that, as yet, it has only passed a private press! Cowper's Hill appears to me hard, and heavy in the comparison, destitute of the poetic pictures, and of the variety, which grace and inspirit Needwood. Windsor Forest is fine verse, but extremely inferior to Needwood in the prime excellence of local verse—appropriation.

How beautifully Mr Mundy's poem opens!—all is to the eye, and in the liveliest poetic tints. We see the green-robed dryad tripping down the turfy glade, with health and gladness, and wild enthusiasm in her countenance. The Genius of the forest appears with great dignity, reclined on his primrose-bed, listening to the rhymes of a druid, and bending his eye on former times, while his sylvan vassals are casting their garlands at his feet. We see him start up, and extend his wand, beneath which the whole of the scenery opens and expands; and we are presented with a landscape worthy the pencil of Claude.

The exordium of the second part, is it not finely illustrated by the portrait of Fiction, bending

her rainbow, and decking it with prismatic colours?

L'Allegro, or Il Penseroso, have scarcely a lovelier passage than that from the 26th to the 50th line of that second canto; and is not the dress of the fairy queen, in the next paragraph, new, and well-fancied? and is not her concert charming? The remainder of this second part has pictures, painted from nature, and with a master-hand. Do you not see the old earth-stopper, with his lantern gleaming down the glade; and hear the solemn passing-bell in the fields of air?—and then the ghastly face of the deer-stealer behind the oak, seen by the lightning's flash!

The next sentence beginning,

"Night, when rude blasts thy scenes deform,"

is very sublime indeed. There is Shakespearean spirit in its close, which makes the obscene sow a terrible grace, thrilling us with horror, like the incantations in Macbeth. And how do you like the dark pictures of witchcraft and murder? is not that of the latter, starting at the sight of his bloody hands, beneath the sudden gleam of the shrouded moon, original and impressive?

Do you not think the third part varied with mournful sweetness by the episode of the weaver, and that the little tale is told with beautiful and pathetic simplicity?—that the zoology in the fourth

part is charming?—and that the description of the fox-hounds, streaming over the fields, with its similies of the Aurora Borealis, and of the sudden flood, broken into numerous currents, is Homeric?—Your accurate taste will find the fifth and last part considerably inferior to the others in poetic excellence.

I beg your Ladyship's pardon for my forgotten promise of reading Celestina. To be sure, the name did completely sicken me. What a vain fool must a parent be who could in reality give such a name to an infant girl! who could hope that the beauty and virtues of the so presumptuously christened could be in such excess as not to burlesque the appellation!—Celestina!!!—how silly! The author will find it difficult to recompense me for such a true coxcombly title. We have a pompous man in this town, meanly born, and meanly educated, and low in fortune, who christened his son Augustus.

The omission of Julia Mandeville, in my list of favourite novels, was not purposed. I have never seen the book since I was sixteen. It delighted me then. The more recent impressions, made by Mrs Brookes's other works, overshadowed the time-dimmed image of the engaging Julia.

I have the honour to remain your Ladyship's obliged and devoted friend and servant.

LETTER XXXIV.

MRS T———.

Lichfield, March 2, 1796.

THOUGH, from the overwhelming number of established claims upon my pen, it is wholly out of my power to make new engagements of regular correspondence, yet neither can I be silent, though even under your permission, to the infinitely too kind, too partial letter now on my table. Deeply sorry am I to learn from it, that, by a similar accident, you have been a fellow-sufferer with me in those cruel pains, and yet more cruel apprehensions, which, of late, have so frequently embittered my existence; though the physicians and surgeons would never allow my sufferings to be of the dreaded nature. I hope to heaven that yours have given you the same cordial assurance, though you do not say so. If they have, it is surely rash to follow such a rigid plan of abstinence. I have heard, and I have read, that disorders produced by too spare a diet, are with more difficulty cured than those of repletion. Take care, therefore, how you combat a phantom

with dangerous weapons. One would certainly repel the dire reality at every hazard. How could you entertain such a thought as that upon the testimony of which my eye now glances? viz. that, if it were possible, you would remove my pains, and avert my dangers, by taking them upon yourself;—you, a wife and mother;—I, a single unconnected being, whose death could not to any person be a momentous loss!—I hope and trust, dear Madam, that we shall neither of us be the victim of the most terrible disease imaginable.

Mortifying is the knowledge,—how totally incompetent the energies of my mind, abated by time, and frequent want of health, to meet the fires of such high-wrought enthusiasm. In my best days, however I might admire and revere unbeheld excellence, whether real or imaginary; yet I will not boast that my heart was ever capable of feeling strong affection without personal consciousness. It was not sufficiently spiritualized.

You are under a spell, of strange potency, respecting me. It is enough to make me dread our meeting, aware as I am of the consequences of high-raised expectations;—that it is with them as with the sea,

> "The higher their full tides impetuous flow,
> The farther back again they ebbing go,"

when experience banishes the moon-struck influence.

I cannot endure to see a creature, so imperfect as myself, invested with attractions and excellencies to which I have no pretence. Perfectly do I feel the ground on which I stand. I know that I have talents, and some good qualities; that I am ingenuous; that my mind is neither stained nor embittered by envy; that I detest injustice, and am grateful for every proof of affection. I can believe what I am told about my countenance expressing the feelings of my heart; but I have no charms, no grace, no elegance of form or deportment. If, in youth, my complexion was clear, glowing, and animated; if my features were agreeable, though not regular, they have been the victims of time. When tolerably well, the cheerfulness of my temper is unclouded,—but, beneath the pressure of disease, I am weakly dejected. I wish to be obliging; yet, if my manners are not rustic, there is about me an hereditary absence, which always did, and always must prevent their taking the polish of perfect good breeding; and, to balance my tolerable properties, there is frequent indiscretion from an excess of frankness, and from native and yet unconquered impetuosity of temper;—and fortitude, alas! I almost wholly want.

As to an actual picture, which you express so fervent a desire to possess, it was always my resolve never to sit for one between the periods of forty and sixty, if I should live to attain the latter. A portrait, where any portion of youthful appearance can be preserved, may be pleasing, and it may be interesting in the mellow tints of venerable age; but the hardness of middle life is detestable on canvas, or ivory.

I sat for a miniature to Smart, twenty-five years ago. He was esteemed eminent, and I sat to Miers six years after, of whom Mr Hayley has beautifully and justly said, in his poetic Epistles on Painting,

> "His magic pencil, in its narrow space,
> Pours the full portion of miniatur'd grace."

Miers took immense pains with my picture; he made it a very fine one, but he did not make it like; and Smart's had still less resemblance. Both of them were long since given away.

Ten years ago, Romney painted me nearly at full length. It is a graceful, expressive portrait, and some people think it like, others deny the resemblance. Several of my old friends have made the same request which you, with so much flattering earnestness, express. What I have refused in this the interdicted period to old friends, I cannot, with any shadow of justice, grant to a new

one. Suffer, I entreat you, circumstances so imperious to expiate a refusal which, without them, would be churlish.

There is no enduring that you should be at the trouble of so circuitous and laborious an inquiry after my health. If you will accept, once in three months, a few brief lines on that subject from myself, or from one of my friends here, they shall be yours. I grieve that prior engagements, and the rapid flight of time, deprive me of ampler correspondence with one so kind to me. I was unfortunate in being absent from Lichfield when, in the summer 1785, you were here, else you would have honoured me with a visit, which must have broken the spell of your imagination. Spells are not good things for the mind. Illusions may be pleasurable, but we recollect them with something like shame when truth has dissolved the charms of Fancy.

I wonder not that you are rallied upon the enthusiasm you so openly express about me. Surely you are the first female that ever fondly attached herself to the idea of a woman she never saw, to whose remembrance she fancies her beloved husband attached by an impression which, she says, he tells her is indelible.

Colonel T—— had a grave and pensive cast of manners when I first knew him, in the flower of

our mutual youth. Without doubt there is a marked congeniality in some of the circumstances of your and my destiny. To me as to you, Colonel T—— appeared interesting in that juvenile period, from a dignified seriousness, an air of refined attachment, not to a present but an absent object. His brother officers confirmed the idea which that shaded address, if I may so express myself, had excited, and named the late Lady Middleton, then Miss Georgiana Chadwick, as the lovely source of its pensiveness.

I made an experiment upon his heart, as he will tell you, and own that I was not its first passion. I felt a wish to hear from himself the history of his mind, and to pour the balm of pity into the wounds of love. My experiment succeeded; the shock of jealousy was apparent. I did not like to see him suffer, and almost instantly told him that the intelligence was fabulous, and invented for a test of the truth of the report which had reached me. He ingenuously acknowledged that it was not unfounded, talked freely to me of his impression and of its hopeless nature. It was only in the latter part of many weeks association that he gave me slight and transient hints of transferring attachment.

The regiment then removing, we separated with tender, but not visibly impassioned regret.

Two years after, in the winter 1764, we met accidentally in London, renewed our friendship, which soon became mutual, and acknowledged love; but in him so apparently reasonable and serene, as not once to inspire an idea that, if authority should break our engagement, his passion would prove unextinguishable. My father, on discovering, disapproved and dissolved it. I believed that so placid a lover would not suffer severely from the disappointment, nor once imagined that his attachment would be proof against time. This conviction extinguished that part of my own regard, which was more tender than esteem, and left my heart vacant to receive another impression more instant and enthusiastic than I had ever previously experienced. Its vivacity induced me to think that I had till then mistaken friendship for love. This happened the ensuing year, 1765. The inspirer was the present General, then Cornet V——, a native of Lichfield, but absent six years to receive a military education in France and at Dublin, where he was page to the Lord-Lieutenant. At that period he returned, with the united graces of early youth, the dignity of manhood, and with politeness which had the first polish. He was tall, and, in my eyes, extremely lovely. If my susceptibility of these attractions was culpable fickleness to Mr

T——, Mr V——'s inconstancy to me avenged it at full.

During three months, in which we were frequently together, V—— had appeared assiduously attentive, and ardently attached to me. His behaviour then suddenly altered from enamoured fervour to cool civility, bordering upon utter neglect.

I believe this change resulted from higher views, excited from ambition, awakened by the remonstrance of a person whom he believed his friend, and who, I knew, was not mine. His father and sisters had observed our growing attachment with pleasure, and seemed to regret its dissolution.

I felt, during a short time, tortured and wretched in the extreme; but I had pride, high spirits, intellectual resources, and fancied myself not born to be the victim of contemned affection. I resolved, however, not again to hope that I could be the object of lasting passion. I had proposals of marriage from several, whom my father wished me to approve; but such sort of overtures, not preceded by assiduous tenderness, and which expected to reap the harvest of love without having nursed its germs, suited not my native enthusiasm, nor were calculated to inspire it. I had known what it was to love, to all the excess of the sentiment; and the sweetness and vivacity of the im-

pression, though obliterated by ingratitude, was not forgotten. My liberty seemed a thousand times preferable to the dispiriting fetters of an unimpassioned connexion.

The changed V—— soon after deserting me, joined his regiment in Ireland, and staid there two years. On his return, he attached himself to one of my most intimate friends; a graceful but not beautiful young lady. Her fortune, in her own possession, exceeded my future prospects. Yes, to her he devoted his attentions, on whose bosom I had shed those mingled tears of indignation and lacerated tenderness which he had caused to flow.

Their loves, however, nothing weakened my amity to her; they carried with them my best wishes to the altar, and I heard their nuptial peals without a sigh. She died in childbirth the next year. Her early fate excited my sorrow, and his sufferings my sympathy. I wrote a monody on her death. It has never been published, but may one day appear in a collection of my poems.

General, then Captain V——, after the elapse of a few years, married the daughter of a man of rank, and high in military command, and soon again became a widower. By the co-operation of his father-in-law's interest, with the distinguish-

ed gallantry of his own conduct, in the course of this disastrous war, he rose to the rank of General.

Four years after parental authority had dissolved my engagements to Colonel T——, we again accidentally met in London. Imagine my feelings when he declared his unceasing affection, and told me that he had returned to England, with the hope that an acquisition to his fortune would induce my father to consent to our union! Conceive the shame of which I became susceptible, on finding myself so much surpassed in constancy! Never had Colonel T—— said, either with his lip or pen, that he could not become indifferent to me. Not one of his letters had ever breathed a tenth part of the enthusiastic partiality to me of which yours is so full.

Yet, ah! how humiliating was my consciousness! I could not, on the instant, explain my sentiments; but I wrote to him, the next day, confessing the change in my heart respecting himself; but I forget whether pride did, or did not, withhold the circumstance which had produced it, and the acknowledgment that I had been, in my turn, forsaken.

Here is a world of egotism—into which the retrospections of your letter has betrayed me. So

intimately relating to him you love, perhaps it may not prove wearying.

Without any compliment, the verses with which you honoured me in your last are very ingenious. They have no sin against poetic beauty, whatever they may have against truth.

I hear, with pleasure, of the graces and accomplishments of your daughters, and of the maternal attention to which they owe them.

Believe me, dear Madam, with much and very grateful esteem, your obliged, &c.

LETTER XXXV.

EDWARD JERNINGHAM, ESQ.

Lichfield, March 5, 1796.

YOUR letter interested and amused, even while it told me unwelcome intelligence;—that the mind of a certain lady, whose destiny excites general solicitude, does not promise that irradiation of the domestic circle which might induce her distinguished consort to consider her as its sun;—and that you ungratefully determine to desert the Muse, whose inspirations have been liberal. You

desert her, not upon duty, but upon dogma*, whose logical precision seems to condense the whole collection of reasons why a man, who has filled three volumes, ought to fill no more than three.

Let us try for an impressive axiom on the other side the question. If a man has written well, he will probably continue to write well, and six good books are better than three;—if ill, he should try to efface the recollection of past dimness by present lustre;—if moderately, let him try to be "like music, sweetest at the close."

As to my Aonian pregnancy, as you comically term it, I trust you have no mountain expectations; for, if you should, a mouse will certainly be the result. The publisher has orders to present you with an early copy. Mrs M. Vernon, who is always and every way good to me, will receive a visit from my mouse-bantling at the same period. If you should both of you pet, and call it *pretty love*, its mother will be right proud.

Burke has proved himself on this occasion, as on all the past, a great luminary in genius and eloquence. I always admired the justness of his

* Viz. "If I have written well," says Mr Jerningham, "there is enough; and if ill, too much."—S.

now-accomplished prophecies, and spirited philippics on the monstrous and unorganized democracy, with its inevitably ensuing guilt and misery; yet I cannot esteem the man, because of that excessive toryism which he unhappily blended with his reprobation of French principles.

There is no forgetting how incompatible his past and present maxims in British politics; nor can we avoid believing that, with him who stoops to receive pecuniary recompense for dereliction of recorded principles, the hope of pecuniary recompense was its motive,—but I am speaking of his first work on the French revolution,—of this last, on the Duke of Bedford, I have seen only as yet a newspaper extract.

Do you not rejoice in Mr Hayley's able and ample rescue of Milton's moral fame from the talons of the envious, unjust bigot in religion, in politics, and in poetic judgment?

You please me with what you say of our prince. Often have we heard of his graces; I am better pleased to hear you speak of his erudition. I used to be afraid that I saw in him another Charles II.; but it augurs a better resemblance that he reveres virtue; and, towards our amiable friend of his household, Mrs Vernon,—

" That he esteems the consecrated snow
On Dian's lap."

Adieu!

LETTER XXXVI.

Mrs Thornton.

Lichfield, March 7, 1796.

The newspapers of last week announced your marriage, no rumour of which had previously reached me. I could not help being affected at the sight of the paragraph;—the loved name of Marianne Sykes no longer to be found in my heart's vocabulary!—the walls of Westella no more, except temporarily, to glow with their loveliest irradiation!—the loss my dear old friends must daily and hourly experience, however it may be in part recompensed by the consciousness of their dear girl's happiness!—these reflections, rushing at once upon my mind, sent the tears to my eye.

Mr Thornton is become possessed of a treasure, whose value has, by all to whom it hitherto

appertained, been felt with fondest appreciation. I assure myself that the choice of Miss Sykes's heart will prove himself worthy to possess it, by promoting, with the most solicitous tenderness, the happiness of Mrs Thornton.

My letter was meant to congratulate; yet it perversely seems to breathe something more like regret than joy. The congratulation of mere acquaintance is unmixed; that of affection, which finds an unexpected and important change in the situation of its object, wears a shade of pensiveness;—yet it is not therefore the less, but the more fervent.

You will soon receive from me a little rhyming present; but as I sent my orders to the publisher before I knew of your marriage, it will be directed to an unexisting person. It will, however, find its way to Mrs Thornton. She has not forgotten a name so long pleasing to my ear.

May every happiness attend its renunciation! Dearest Madam, yours faithfully.

LETTER XXXVII.

THOS. PARKE, ESQ. of London *.

Lichfield, March 9, 1796.

FOR the proof your last obliging letter gave me of friendly exertion, greater than I could have

* This gentleman (though personally unknown to the author) after the first sheet of the Langollen Vale publication was printed off, found the manuscript much sullied and defaced by the printer. He voluntarily took the kind trouble of transcribing it for the printers, requesting leave to retain the original copy himself. He accompanied this request with the following sonnet:

Snatch'd from the tortuous grasp, and touch impure,
Of spoilers—reckless whose creative mind,
And witching skill, these varied strains combined
In soul-subduing verse, that can allure
To rapturous extasy, henceforth be sure
Of more fit homage; rest ye here, enshrined
Beneath my letter'd cope, in union join'd
With Cowper, Hayley, all, whose lays secure
Unfading wreaths to Albion. Fondly dear
To me have ever risen the sons of song.
Seward I honour'd as their bright compeer,
The syren-sister of the tuneful throng;
And hence my ardency of zeal sincere
To wrest her sibyl-leaves from senseless wrong.

hoped without the stimulus of personal regard, my heart has preceded by its thanks an involuntarily tardy pen.

You do the sullied manuscript much honour, in wishing to retain it amongst the treasures of your book-shelves. If I was not gratified by the request, I should be one of those beings whom one often meets in this odd world of ours; who are proud in the wrong place;—too proud to be obliged. Such are all writers who are impatient of candid criticisms, even on an unpublished work, not given to the public, but the author, and which cannot, therefore, operate against the reputation of a work they generously endeavour to improve.

Yes, I well remember Mrs Parke's kind wish of conversing with me, when she was Miss Reynolds, and resident near Lichfield, in the unintellectual house of pride;—but I forget the particular circumstance which counteracted our mutual desire on that subject.

What an admirable composition is Burke's letter! I read it for the first time, except in extract, last night. The west is indeed on fire with his descending glories. In what broad and effulgent day do they reveal the infatuation of the Duke of Bedford; sharpening the axe for his own neck, and for the necks of all men of rank and proper-

ty in the kingdom, whether they had been opposers or abettors of the dire imitation *here* of anarchy, atheism, and massacre. Surely this trumpet-tongued pamphlet will awaken the Duke from his miserable day-dream, to behold his own certain fate in that of Orleans, should the malignant party succeed in " leading up the death-dance in England."

But as I always lamented the extreme of toryism, into which this great man's first work on the French revolution unnecessarily and wantonly deviated, so is there one passage in this last emanation from his luminous mind, which I would have knelt to him to expunge, had I known him, and seen this work ere it passed the Rubicon.—I mean the passage about old Cato and the young Scipios. Without having heard or read of any reply to it from the seditious tribe, I know the use they will make of that very ill-judged paragraph; viz. the same use that infidelity makes of some of the unaccountable passages in Scripture. The Scriptures alone contain truths more important to the welfare of mankind, than does almost every other sentence in this work;—truths, that are graced by the riches of allusion, the play of fancy, and the poignancy of wit.

In the Gentleman's Magazine for January, I saw Miss Williams's beautiful eulogium on her

friend Dr Kippis. In general knowledge, in private virtues, he probably merited the lavish applause it bestows,—but her gratitude for his early patronage and praise, has clothed his talents with much of radiance which is merely ideal, as the quantity of false criticism on verse, extant in the Monthly Review, through all the years in which he supplied the strictures on poetry, evince. His judgment was a broken spear for genius to lean upon. Miss Williams's poems display abundance of exquisite fancy, and of harmonious numbers. After having been revised by Kippis, they are before the world with an almost equal abundance of poetic errors, from incongruous metaphors, and misapplied epithets. The hand of judgment, guided by friendship, would easily have pointed them out—but Kippis saw them not; and she, not aware of his moleism, relied upon it that all was well. Adieu!

LETTER XXXVIII.

Miss Ponsonby.

Lichfield, March 23, 1796.

I am indebted to the shrine of friendship for two charming letters. Yours, as the elder sister, claims my first acknowledgments. All that is grateful, all that is attached, will be ever warm from my heart towards each honoured and accomplished friend, whose virtues and talents diffuse intellectual sunshine, that adorns and cheers the loveliest of the Cambrian vales.

I blush to own how faint my recollection of the ingenious Mr Chappelow. To personal consciousness, my memory is ever strangely treacherous, unless it has been strongly imprest upon it by interesting conversation. The seldom and transient visits that gentleman made beneath this roof, were in my youthful days. To my father, then in the full vigour of his well-stored mind, Mr C.'s attentions, as they ought, were chiefly directed. He was in the suite of the Bridgeman family, with which I am glad to find his connections continue. Lady Bradford's once dazzling beauty and graces,

were the first inspiration of my infant muse, at eight years old; and her fondness for me at that period, made an indelible impression on my young heart. True pleasure should I have, in knowing that tranquillity of spirit comforts and illumines the decline of an existence, whose rising day attained its zenith in such unusual splendour.

The kind terms in which her friend, Mr Chappelow, spoke of me to you and Lady Eleanor, does me honour, while it reproaches my recollection for the faded lineaments of his image.

Ah! I am afraid you are too partial to my attempted poetic consecration of your own Langollen Vale, and its bright mistresses.—But I am delighted with your praise of the whole publication —that my placid landscape of the Hoyle-Lake-Downs, shines in soft colouring on your mind's eye, and that the effusions of my heart in the little poem Eyam, met the animated sympathy of theirs, to whom the power of the affections is so fully known.

It gratifies me that you share my avowed partiality for that little sonnet of mine, beginning, "Now young ey'd Spring*."—Yet I own I a little differ from your preference of the opening and

* See the publication entitled Langollen Vale.—S.

close to those lines in the centre, which present a contrasted and gloomy landscape, and an impersonization of winter; the former drawn from nature, not from books, and the latter striking and impressive. The sudden pause after the word *strays*, when it has begun the next line, has, to my conception, a forcible effect on the imagination; and the comfortless personage rises into solemn dignity in the remainder of the line, and becomes the awful lord of the desolated year. Yet is it little wonder that the softer and gay opening of this sonnet, and the piety of its close, had more charms for those in whom retirement has nursed the spirit of devotion, and who have dedicated so much of their attention to placing the cherub Beauty on the rustic shrine of Nature.

With all the delight I feel in contemplating the lovely objects of creation, still has my imagination ever been prone to dwell yet more on the solemn, the grand, the sublime. It is this bias which renders the poetry of Ossian almost pre-eminently dear to me.

I was sorry that illness prevented my seeing Mr North. I wonder not that he thought Mr Saville looked ill. His frequent nervous indispositions, though slight, alarm his many friends. All who know him well, and are themselves good, are his friends. His life is of the utmost importance to

his daughter and her children, and of great value to me. His long-tried friendship is all that remains to me of my youthful attachments, within the sphere of frequent association.

I have just broken the seal of a letter which contains mournful intelligence—the death of my valued maternal friend, Mrs Sykes of Westella, in Yorkshire. She just lived to see my sometime pupil, her amiable daughter, married to a gentleman of immense fortune and distinguished beneficence, after having educated and settled in the world a large and prosperous family of sons. Her excellent husband survives,

> "Like the weak and widow'd vine,
> To wind his blasted tendrils o'er the plain."

Adieu, dearest Madam! for my heart is heavy.

LETTER XXXIX.

CHRIS. SMYTHE, ESQ.

Lichfield, April 7, 1796.

I BLUSH to reflect how long I have been indebted to you, for one of the most ingenious and interesting letters that ever met my eye. Vivid are its landscapes of the Caledonian regions—but I regret that you did not extend your ramble

> "Amid the sea-girt Hebrides, that guard
> In filial train, Britannia's parent coast;"

though not all the grand sterilities, they must have presented to your pencil, could have enabled them so keenly to thrill your spirit as it was thrilled by the local consciousness of treading the now desolate tracks of Inverlochy, Cawdor, and Inverness. Did you not pass through Forres in your way to Inverness?

What a totally unclassic—what a leaden spirit must that be which urged the D— of G—— to destroy, through avarice of their materials, the ruins that poetry has consecrated to fame!

And now let me thank you for a more recent obligation. Amidst the number of polite letters, with which my various literary acquaintance have honoured my Langollen Vale publication, yours is super-eminent in the ingenuity of discriminating praise, which, above all general encomium, gratifies a writer. I have sent it, with its fascinating predecessor, to the accomplished Recluses, whose whole warm hearts are in the reception which my lately emerged poems shall meet with from the distinguished few that make encomium fame, and whose praise is potent to recompense the stupid strictures of my anonymous foes amongst the public critics.

Lady Eleanor, and her friend, will be delighted by your comparing the wild and the soft landscapes of this my publication, to the greatness of Salvator, and the elegance of Claude. I was sure you would like Cary's sonnet, that lovely compendium of the poem it precedes and adorns.

The Duke of Somerset and Mr Mitchel, last summer, offered the incense of respect and attention at the sweet shrine in the vale. Pleasing recollection of those gentlemen lives in the remembrance of its goddesses, who are, as you will suppose, extremely awake to the perceptions of genius and knowledge. I thought myself honoured in the Duke and Mr Mitchel's visit to me at

Lichfield, in an abode which, though a mansion pleasant and spacious to my utmost wish, breathes of nothing above the level of mere common and stileless life. They were here on our grotesque Whitsun-Monday anniversary, connected, time immemorial, with the charter of our city.—It is the vulgar jubilee of the town and its environs. Guns are fired over every house;—gaudy morris-dancers caper in the thronged streets;—emblematic figures, and garlands, are carried on poles;—meat, cakes, and wine, are given gratis, under awnings;—drums, and tabors, and fiddles, are dinning amid the crowd,

"And all is riot and rude merriment."

I am much gratified, though surprised at the too flattering mention made to you of this visit by the young Duke. I always immure myself at home through that day, and my domestics leave me, to partake of amusements better suited to their taste than mine. Languor and pain hung about me with incapacitating influence. I wonder his Grace did not ask you how you could endure to write to, or converse with, such an antiquated dowdy.

I congratulate you, and every lover of justice, on Mr Hayley's total rescue of Milton's moral character from the talons of the critical vulture, and from the tainting breath of his envy. Mr

Hayley's Life of the Great Poet is on a novel and delightful plan of biography, by which the poetry of the bard becomes the mirror of his life's history, and of the feelings to which its incidents gave birth. Few things are perfect. The dedication does not please me, from its familiarity of address and epithet. The style of a dedication should be serious to be respectful. There, " it is no sign of hot love cooling, to use an enforced ceremony;"—and, in the work itself, we are impatient of those fruitless endeavours to conciliate the idolaters of Johnson, while they disclose the enormities of his injustice " to the shamed eye of day."

Your promised re-visitation of our little city, and of myself, so long delayed, is, as Burke finely says of democratic humanity " at the horizon, and like the horizon, it flies always before us."

LETTER XL.

Rev. W. B. Stevens, of Repton.

Lichfield, April 27, 1796.

Slight circumstances, dear Sir, cannot induce me to suspect my friends of any thing resembling ingratitude. If, which sometimes happens, they never acknowledge the little rhyming tributes of my esteem which I may send them, I conclude they cannot like the verses, and are too sincere to flatter me on their subject. That your kind assurances of a better fate for my late publication were impeded, by the disabling influence of your constitutional fiend, excites my concern and my sympathy. Most of us, when the healthy spring-time of life is past, have some corporal demon, that takes up his cruel residence in our perishable frames, robbing us of the comforts of ease, the energies of cheerfulness, and of all the powers of intellectual exertion. Beneath its persecution, often do I wish "to doze out what remains of life." At such periods, I could as soon build temples as write verses, which should not prove the mere lees of imagination. But, under every

impression of pain and weakness, your sonnet, tremblingly inscribed by your left hand, has the bright wine of the fancy in its first sprightly running.

Warmly do I thank you for this gratifying exertion. These are the more than golden recompenses for the anxious and irksome bustle of publication—for the cold neglect of some we had fondly hoped would have been pleased with our attempts, and for the ignorance, impertinence, or secret yet personal enmity of anonymous criticism.

The picture of former ages, in the beginning of the sonnet*, is sublime.—Freedom bending from

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* *Sonnet, by the Reverend* W. B. Stevens.

Cambria exult! again a voice divine
Floats on thy hills, as erst wild hymn'd the ear
Of Freedom, bending from her native shrine
To white-rob'd bards, her genuine offspring dear.
Long hers, and Fancy's pride, but vanish'd long.
Rejoice, ye rock-screen'd vallies, mute no more,
But echoing kindred energies of song.
That voice how sweet on Deva's haunted shore,
While fairy harps aerial music blend!
From glen to cliff borne on th' enchanted gale,
Hark, in new triumph, how the notes ascend,
Awakening transport in Langollen's vale!
Cambria exult! and long the lay retain,
Tho' Lichfield boast the mistress of the strain.

her shrine, amid the Cambrian rocks; and listening to her white-robed bards.

Elegant are the lines of kind encomium on the strains which endeavour to retouch the time-faded tints of Langollen's early hours, and to paint, in Aonian hues, those which now result to her from the tasteful and literary pursuits of the Rosalind and Celia of real life, as Mr Hayley, with felicity of allusion, calls them.

Your epithet, *haunted*, for the Deva, is happy; —so is the imputed mixture of aerial strains with those thus highly flattered. The float of the sounds from glen to cliff, by one of the refined arts of true poetry, presents the romantic features of the scene, while it seems only praising the lays that hymn them. This sonnet is of the higher orders of verse. If the second edition of my late work had not been printed off, I should have requested your permission to have prefixed it with Cary's.

I can truly say, that I never read any verses of yours which did not breathe the genuine spirit of Delphic inspiration. Often do my literary friends hear me express regret, that the stupid malignity, the Midas-decision of the Critical Review should have had power, as, by your long inexertion it seems to have had, of robbing the present period

of compositions that must have considerably augmented its poetic fame.

I have sent this lovely sonnet to the fair Recluses, who will perceive all its beauty. It was accompanied by these exquisite stanzas, which you wrote many years ago in one of our inn windows. Involving my little muse in their fine eulogium.* on my darling city, I consider them as forming one

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* *Stanzas written in the George-Inn window, at Lichfield, by the Rev.* W. B. STEVENS, *of Repton, Derbyshire.*

I.

Fair city! lift, with conscious glory crown'd,
The spiry structures of thy Mercian state,
While history bids her ancient trump resound
How war, in wrath, unbarr'd thy blood-stain'd gate.

II.

Not that the praise of ancient days alone
Is thine, fair city, blest thro' every age;
War's scythed car, yon miracles of stone,
Bow to the splendours of thy letter'd page.

III.

Here Johnson fashion'd his elaborate style,
And Truth, well-pleas'd, the moral work survey'd;
Here, on her darling's cradle wont to smile,
Thalia with her Garrick fondly play'd.

of the most precious garlands that ever poetic talent wove for it, or for me.

I hope you are by this time emancipated from the "durance vile," and are enjoying the youth of the year. May you rejoice in very many of its blooming renovations! Adieu!

LETTER XLI.

THOMAS PARKE, ESQ.

Lichfield, May 9, 1796.

YOU say I have doubtless seen all the reviews that mention my Langollen Vale publication.—No, indeed, by no means all—nor even any by voluntary inquiry. I never hunt out reviews of my own writings, nor of my favourite compositions from other pens. For mine, I desire not to trouble

IV.

And here the flower of England's virgin train,
Boast of our isle, Lichfield's peculiar pride,—
Here Seward caught the dew-drops for her strain
From grief, and pity's intermingled tide.
Exult, fair city! and indulge the praise
A grateful stranger to thy glory pays.

myself about what is just as likely to be an abuse as praise, even if I wrote as well as Gray. Just and well-discriminating criticism on poetry, is even more rare than original and beautiful poetic writing.

I know how much the decision of reviewers affects the sale of a composition;—but since authors, who are above attempting to bribe, or in any degree influence them, cannot help themselves, there is no good in ruminating, or ever once looking at the injustice or stupidity of spiteful or incompetent critics. I have, therefore, constantly desired my friends not to obtrude any such upon my attention.

If my poems are of that common order which have, as Falstaff says, a natural alacrity in sinking, the praise of hireling and nameless critics would not keep them above the gulf of oblivion. If, on the contrary, they possess the buoyant property of true poetry, their fame will be established in after years, when no one will ask, What said the reviewers?

Mr White brought me the Analytic Review, the Monthly Mirror, and the European Magazine, because they are favourable to my late work. Some of the strictures upon it in the Analytic are spirited and ingenious, with a degree of discrimination. They seem aware of my design, that this

selection from the mass of my poetic manuscripts, should present specimens of the different orders of poetry:—but they make one strange blunder, which shows with how little attention even the most ingenious of the trading critics read the works upon which they decide;—and therefore how incompetent their decisions are likely to prove. They say Eyam is a very pleasing poem in blank verse!! They also, even while they are praising Langollen Vale, insinuate that it is not the superior, though the first poem in the collection.

In deciding upon the comparative merit of my own compositions, I cannot be supposed partial. If creative imagination be, as it is always allowed, the first excellence of poetic writing, then the so much more various and contrasted circumstances, descriptions, and personifications of that poem, touched and embodied into poetic life, place it on considerably higher ground than its companions of the collection.

The Runic poem seems the favourite with the Analytic Reviewer; but amidst all the solemn wildness which the sublime and terrific subject suggested, there is there no imagery more impressive or grand, than the impersonizations of Plague and Superstition in the Langollen Vale;—or more spirited than that of Cambria on a rock, watching the onset and progress of the battle;—first shrink-

ing with terror of the event, and then bounding from cliff to cliff with exultation in the victory:—while these bold features of the poem are contrasted with the softness of the enamoured legend,—with the melancholy grandeur of the Valle-Crucis ruins, and of their surrounding objects;—and again, those pensive scenes, with the gay description of the fairy palace, dedicated to Friendship and Science;—its shadowy evening landscape, its prismatic lights, its aerial music, and the pursuits of its fair Recluses.

Another odd observation in the same Review.—It says the ensuing four lines, which are certainly among the best I have written, faintly describe Roubilliac's sublime monument in Wrexham Church:

> The sainted maid, amid the bursting tomb,
> Hears the last trumpet thrill its murky gloom,
> With smile, triumphant over Death and Time,
> Lifts the rapt eye, and rears the form sublime.

Terming these lines faint description, puts me in mind, in a reverse way, of Boydell's advertisement of his fine print of General Pierson's death, thus—"This print, to say the least of it, is not only the first print that England, but that the world, has produced."

I should like to ask the Alderman, since *that* is the least, to tell us what is the most that could be said of that print; and the reviewer, since he calls those four lines faint description, what it is that he would call a strong one? I fancy each would be somewhat puzzled to answer the questions.

The European Magazine, in its review of my three first publications, Cook, André, and the Monody on Lady Millar, imputed first-rate excellence to the poetic powers of their author. In reviewing the best poem I ever wrote, Louisa, that Magazine was mean enough to contradict their former testimony in the widest degree, by admitting the decision of an irritated poetaster against that work, and which involved my former publications with the censure passed on *it*, by alleging that immorality, vulgarness, bombast, and even obscurity, pervaded all my writings. The English Review admitted a twin-decision, evidently from the same pen, at the same period.

From those publications, therefore, I expected, on this occasion, similar abuse—but lo! the European Magazine again mentions me with applause! It adds, that the poem Eyam appeared in one of their numbers for the year 1792. I neither saw nor heard that it had got into print; sent, I conclude, by some person to that Maga-

zine, who had obtained a manuscript copy from me.

The Monthly Mirror, though it talks a little idly about my Runic poem, praises it and the rest of the collection. I have not seen the British Critic, which you mention as reviewing me. If candidly, I should like to see it, but had rather not contemplate malicious strictures. I take it for granted those of the English Review are of that complexion; and, as such, would shun them. Some authors seem to delight in taking vipers by the tail.—I have no taste for such kind of amusements.

Adieu! and believe me, with much sense of obligation, yours, &c.

LETTER XLII.

GEORGE HARDINGE, ESQ.

Lichfield, May 13, 1796.

I AM flattered that you like my recent publication. You and I write sonnets upon the same model; and I confess I think it the only good one. We wish that energy should be more the

leading character of the style than elegance—and that the floating pause should give the numbers more of the grandeur of harmony, than of the airy sweetness of melody. Such are Milton's; and your sonnets have caught their manner more exactly than mine.

I wish that, to this condensed and impressive order of verse, a graver title had originally been given. The name misleads those readers who have not well considered its nature, and makes them expect a minuet rather than a serious strain. Adieu!

LETTER XLIII.

Mrs M. Powys.

Lichfield, June 1, 1796.

The lunar landscape, which you have been so good to send me, is welcome as it is beautiful. Extremely has it been admired in our Lichfield circles, and by every stranger guest who seeks me on their transit through our little city. It is thus that you kindly reward the encomiast of Langollen Vale with one of the grandest of its scenes.

This warm praise of the poem which bears its name is doubly welcome: first, that it is yours; and next, that it is discriminating. When, in return for a presented work of mine, I receive a merely general acknowledgment, with whatever flattering epithet that acknowledgment may be sugared, as *ingenious*, *charming*, &c. I always repent having obtruded my writings on those who do not think it worth their while, by observations on the separate parts, to prove to me that they have even read them. Amiable Mrs Wasey has honoured your favourite, the Eyam, with verses in its praise, which are, in themselves, beautiful. I knew not that she had a poetic talent till it was unveiled to me on this occasion, and in a form so gratifying to that desire to please, which Milton finely calls,

"The last infirmity of noble minds."

I hope to reconcile you to the vignette, by observing, that it was my request to the Rosalind and Celia of Langollen Vale, that my poem on that vale might be enriched with a view of their habitation on its title-page, since themselves, and their scene, form one part of its triple cord of subject.

This view is the most happily chosen of any they could have given me, being from a point which

shews the ruins of Castle Dinas Bran, and the Eglwysig rocks in the back-ground, both of which you know are mentioned; the ruins presenting the scene of the love-story that occupies the middle part of the poem.

The vignette might, it is true, have presented a more striking part of the vale, but would have been less eligible, as having less connection with the poetry.

Certainly this interesting retreat of Lady Eleanor Butler, and Miss Ponsonby, might have been placed where it would have had sublimer scenic accompaniments—but its site is sufficiently lovely, sufficiently romantic. When two females meant to sit down for life in a sylvan retirement, with a small establishment of servants, it became necessary that the desire of landscape-charms should become subservient to the more material considerations of health, protection, and convenience. Their scene, not on those wild heights which must have exposed them to the mountain storms, is yet on a dry gravelly bank, favourable to health and exercise, and sheltered by a back-ground of rocks and hills. Instead of seeking the picturesque banks of the dashing river, foaming through its craggy channel, and whose spray and mists must have been confined, and therefore unwholesome, by the vast rocks and mountains

towering on either hand, they contented themselves with the briery dell and its prattling brook, which descend abruptly from a reach of that winding walk, which forms the bounds of their smiling, though small domain. Situated in an opener part of the valley, they breathe a purer air, while their vicinity to the town of Langollen affords the comforts of convenience, and the confidence of safety.

Have you read Caleb Williams?—that singular production—a novel without love, or intrigue, on the part of the three principal male characters, and without ruined castles, and haunted galleries; yet, where expectation is excited to breathless ardour, and where the terrible Graces extend their petrifying wands. The style of this extraordinary work is manly, compressed, animated, and impressive, in a degree which vies with that of the best writers of this period, in which prose-excellence has attained its *ne-plus-ultra*. I am sorry to observe that the tendency of this work is not good. We find it an indirect libel upon the laws and constitution of Great Britain.

And have you read any of the translations of a short German poem, called, William and Lenora? I hear there are several, but that the one which was shewn to me is the best, and it is printed entire in the Monthly Magazine for

March last. It is the wildest and oddest of all terrible things, and has made considerable noise amongst our few poetic readers. They seem to consider it as perfectly original; and so doing, betray a strange defect of memory, or else they have been infected with the "malady of not marking," since it was indubitably suggested by the old English ballad in the third volume of Percy's collection, viz. Sweet William's Ghost. That ballad, combined with a recollection of the fine metaphoric expression in the Scriptures, "Death on his pale horse," supplied the author with materials for this composition. The short, abrupt measure of the translation before mentioned, suits the rapidity of a midnight journey of a thousand miles. The German poet has given a great accession of sublimity, in spite of the vulgarness of cant phrases, used for the purpose of picturesque sound. The pale steed, on which the lover mounts with his mistress—the flying backward, to right and left of woods, rocks, mountains, plains, and towns, by the speed of the travel, and overhead the scudding back of the moon and stars—the creeping train of the swarthy funeral, chanting the death-psalm, like toads croaking from the dark and lonely moors—the transformation of the knight to a bony and eyeless skeleton—the vanishing of the death-horse, breathing charnel-fires,

then thinning to smoke, and paling, and bleaching away to nothing—are grand additions to the terrific graces of the ancient song. Certainly that is a tame spectre in comparison of this; but then, it has more pathetic passages than the German ballad; instance:

"'O! if I come within thy bower
I am no earth', man,
And if I kiss that rosy lip,
Thy days will not be long.

My bones are buried in a kirkyard,
Afar beyond the sea,
And it is but my sprite, Margaret,
That's speaking now to thee.'

Now she has kilted her robes of green
A piece below her knee,
And all the live-long winter night
The dead corpse followed she.

'Is there any room at your head, Willie,
Is there any room at your feet,
Or any room at your side, Willie,
Wherein that I may creep?'

'There is no room at my head, Marg'ret,
There's no room at my feet,
There's no room at my side, Marg'ret,
My coffin is made so streit.'"

—But I must bid you an abrupt adieu, the room on this sheet being now narrow as William's coffin.

LETTER XLIV.

MRS T———.

Lichfield, June 19, 1796.

How, dearest Madam, shall I acknowledge the obligations I owe you, utterly unprecedented in their nature and degree? Whatever air of cold neglect my long silence to such a letter as this before me may wear, my heart acquits me of the guilt. Ah! there is scarcely a day since its arrival, in which the contents have not wandered through my mind, exciting afresh my wonder,—and my deep concern, that, through so long a period of former years, I should have been as an inauspicious planet, shedding malign influence upon the destiny of an highly deserving pair; exciting also my sincere sympathy in the various afflictions which have wounded, and yet wound a mind so eminently deserving a better fate, toge-

ther with the deep-felt consciousness how little I merit the excess of your partiality.

Your letters prove the most impressive lessons of humility that were ever taught me. From the attempted derogation of injustice, I have always turned with a rising spirit of self-esteem, from the consciousness of deserving, in a certain degree, the respect of those amongst whom I live, and with whom I converse; and this from my talents, my candour, my integrity, and from never having assumed any superiority over my companions. But when I see myself invested by the generous hyperboles of your imagination, with transcending and faultless excellence, I sink into nothing in my own estimation, comparing what you think me with what I really am.

If it is indeed possible, that any recollection respecting myself should have darkened several of your first nuptial years with the clouds of an husband's discontent, I can only deplore its immeasurable infatuation, while I admire the greatness of that character which could teach itself to love the idea of her who had proved, though without her own concurrence, the precluding rival of its superior attractions, the unconscious invader of its sacred claims.

I cannot attempt to comment more minutely upon the pages which describe, with so much im-

pressive eloquence, situations at which my whole soul stands astonished. This is the period of marvels, of events which no foresight could anticipate, against which experience could present no shield. Those public miracles, those baleful energies, before which the peace and interests, the balanced power of Europe, "the unity, and married calm of states," sink blasted, are not more extraordinary than was that anarchy of mind which you describe in Colonel T——, as the sad result of a strange persistence in unavailing regret, to which so long were sacrificed

> "Day's cheeriness, house comforts, nuptial peace,
> Night-rest, and neighbourhood."

To certain incidents, mentioned in your last, I cannot be silent. Upon my solemn word of honour I did not find, nor ever knew, that Colonel T—— had lost, in the year 1770, the ring you mention, once my present; neither did I give away the locket with which he had presented me. It is at this moment in my drawer. Totally unfounded, therefore, was his conviction on both those subjects; so also was the information he received of the gaiety with which I appeared in our little provincial world, the year preceding his marriage with you, viz. 1774. To account for

the impossibility that this information could be true, it is necessary to go a few years back from the period at which he received it. When my attachment to General, then Cornet V——, sunk in the snow-drifts of his altered conduct, Honora Sneyd, educated in our family from five years old, was commencing woman, and only eight years younger than myself; more lovely, more amiable, more interesting, than any thing I ever saw in the female form. As a child, I had loved her with the extremest fondness. Death had deprived me of my beloved and only sister, in the bloom of her youth, who had shared with me the delightful task of instructing our angelic pupil; and, when disappointed love threw all the energies of my soul into the channel of friendship, Honora was its chief object. The charms of her society, when her advancing youth gave equality to our connection, made Lichfield an Edenic scene to me, from the year 1766 to 1771. Her father then recalled her to his own family, after having been fourteen years resident in ours. The domestic separation proved very grievous; but still she was in the same town; we were often together, and her heart was unchanged. Then it was that I wrote the little poem of my late collection, Time Past.

In May 1773 she married. Ah! how deeply was I a fellow-sufferer with Major André on this

marriage!—but her attachment to him had never the tenderness of her friendship for me; it was a mere compound of gratitude and esteem, of which his letters shew that he was always aware. We both lost her for ever. That form, the light of my eyes, was divided from me for life by the Irish sea; and that heart, whose affection I prized more than life, to me became indurated.

Family discontents combined to increase the pressure of that bosom-woe. Another friend, scarcely less dear to me than Honora, was injured, was unhappy,—and those misfortunes were of a nature that, though my sympathy might sooth, it could not remove them. By that deprivation, and by these regrets, were the precious established habits of my life broken, and the native gaiety of my spirit eternally eclipsed, however time might restore constitutional cheerfulness. If I did not renounce society, I avoided it as much as with civility I could. No sprightly parties did I promote, or, when I could help it, join, through the years 1773-4-5-6. How totally, therefore, was Colonel T—— misinformed!

Of the kind call he made with you at this house, in the autumn of 1775, my mother told me when I returned home out of Nottinghamshire, and said how young, how beautiful, how pleasing you appeared. While I listened to her, I regret-

ted my absence; rejoiced that Mr T—— had found the loss of me so sweet a gain, and said to myself, he would perhaps have permitted me to call his bride my friend.

Mrs Price of Chester has lately been my guest. Good sense, a feeling heart, cheerful piety, and a love of books, and of talents, make her an agreeable companion, and a valuable friend. We were as much engaged in company as my indifferent state of health, and the summer-emptiness of our little city, would permit. You were often the subject of our tete-à-tetes, and we united in admiring the uncommon powers and elevation of your mind. I was very much indisposed while she was with me. My bosom-pains were more frequent and oppressive than in the winter. Apprehension often sits heavy on my heart, not only for myself, but for the declining health of a long dear friend—so long dear, as to have shared with me Honora's amity, and all the happiness of the years it illumined.

That lassitude and averseness to writing, which this pain and these gloomy prospects for the future occasion, are miserably ill-calculated to the quantity of that employment to which I am, and must be destined, unless increasing disease, or a loss which nothing could repair, should render me a total bankrupt as to epistolary in-

tercourse. Then devoutly should I wish that my friends might consider me free as the dead—like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave; that are out of remembrance, and cut away from the earth.

But I hope better things from the mercy of Heaven;—that such a living death may never be my lot. I hope also that your kindred pains have not returned; and that your cruel terrors for the fate of your father and uncles are vanished. Great God! how deeply pitiable is the fate of her, who, with an heart like Mrs T——'s, has felt the long pressure of dread lest her father should have been massacred. I do think that such an idea, dwelling upon my mind, would have cost me my reason. O! I hope you have, long ere this time, been exempted from its anguish—that you will be enabled to tell me so. I wish also to know if you persist in that plan of rigid abstinence, and, if you do, how your general health sustains it.

Not yet has my heart lost its solicitude that my publications should interest and please the ingenious; and therefore is it sweet gratification to see you expressing delight in my verse.

LETTER XLV.

Mrs Gell.

Lichfield, June 29, 1796.

You speak of Hopton with a mournful tenderness that must gratify the spirit of its late generous master, if it has any consciousness of its earthly ties. My poem, Eyam, is honoured in having soothed your sensibilities, by a congeniality of regret. Poured from an heart sincerely and mournfully impressed by affectionate recollections, its sentiments, at least, are likely to find an echo in many bosoms—so common is the lot of surviving those we love.

I have not the least doubt that your description of Drury-Lane theatre is perfectly just. Often have I moralized the ambition of that grasping vastness. It is ordained that we cannot extend the gratification of one of our senses beyond certain bounds, without lessening the enjoyments of another. This is universally true respecting both our bodies and minds. To sacrifice those of the ear to the eye in a play-house,

was folly eminently worthy the idiot-frivolity of the present age. If avarice added her grovelling stimulus to that intellectually ruinous plan of extension, and rescued nature and sense should regain their empire over the public taste, it will be discovered that she has widely mistaken her aim; that she will generally find emptiness in that space which was designed to contain multitudes; and thus her mighty theatre, with all its splendour, may prove a cloud in the arms of an Ixion.

Not less contemptible is the twin-degeneracy you mention in the public taste for music. Shakespeare and Handel no longer excite the transports of a London audience. But your sensibility is too poignant, and too natural, to sink, palsied, beneath the touch of that torpedo to real excellence, fashion.

Mr Ireland's civilities could not, I find, bribe your discernment into credulity. You anticipated, in a former letter, the fate of that impudent forgery, attempted without a ray of genius to illuminate the lie, and give it the least colour of probability. I had no opportunity of looking at the manuscripts, but a presentiment that they were surreptitious arose strongly in my mind.

I am pleased that you have the happiness of

Dr Burney's friendship. Are you personally acquainted with his highly ingenious daughter, so rich in the bright creations of the brain?

Our long-esteemed friend Mr Saville's constitution is, alas! much impaired by the daily recurrence of those nervous maladies, which seem invincible. You, who know his perfect goodness of heart, and fine talents, will share my regret on this subject. Apprehensions for him, and for myself, in respect to threatening maladies, cloud my prospect of the future. May yours brighten, as cheerfulness emerges from the gloom of deprivation!

LETTER XLVI.

Mrs Stokes.

Lichfield, June 31, 1796.

I have not seen Wakefield's observations on Pope. They may, as you tell me they are, be very ingenious; but as to plagiarism, Pope would lose little in my esteem from whatever of *that* may be proved against him; since it is allowed

that he always rises above his clumsy models, in their tinsel drapery.

Poetry, being the natural product of an highly-gifted mind, however uncultivated, must exist, in a rude form at least, from the instant that the social compact gives to a man a superplus of time from that which is employed in providing for his natural wants, together with liberation from that anxiety about obtaining such provision, which is generally incompatible with those abstracted ideas from which poetry results. As this leisure, and freedom to thought, arises with the progress of subordination and inequality of rank, men become poets, and this long before their language attains its copiousness and elegance.

The writers of such periods, therefore, present poetic ideas in coarse and shapeless ingenuity. In the unskilled attempt to refine them, they become, in the next stage of the progress, an odd mixture of quaintness and simplicity; but it is reserved for genius, learning, and judgment in combination, supported by the ample resources of a various, mature, and complete language, to elevate, polish, and give the last perfection to the rudiments of poetry,—first so coarse and abortive, —afterwards so quaint, and so shredded out into wearisome redundance.

That work of ever-new poetic information and instruction, T. Warton's Critical Notes to Milton's Lesser Poems, will shew you how very largely Milton took, not only from the classics, but from his verse predecessors in our own language; from Burton's writings, interlarded with verse; from Drayton; from Spenser; from Shakespeare; from the two Fletchers, and from Drummond. The entire plan, and almost all the outlines of the sweet pictures in L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, are in Burton's Anatomic of Melancholy, or a Dialogue between Pleasure and Pain, in verse, with a passage of his in prose; and these were taken and combined in Milton's imagination, with the fine hints in a song in Beaumont and Fletcher's play, The Nice Valour, or Passionate Madman.

In Comus, Milton was much indebted to Fletcher's beautiful pastoral play, The Faithful Shepherdess;—but Milton and Pope, though with excellence different both in nature and degree, were arch-chymists, and turned the lead and tinsel of others to the purest and finest gold.

Dr Stokes is mistaken in supposing Milton my first poetic favourite—great as I deem him, the superior of Virgil, and the equal of Homer, my

heart and imagination acknowledge yet greater the matchless bard of Avon.

I thank you for the discriminating observations in your letter of April the 24th, upon my late publication. Milton says, that from Adam's lip, not words alone pleased Eve;—so may I say, that from your pen praise alone would not satisfy my avidity of pleasing you. The *why* and *wherefore* you are pleased, which is always so ingenious when you write of verse, form the zest which makes encomium nectar. Mr Hayley's letter to me on the subject is very gratifying;—it joins, to a generous ardency of praise, the elegance, spirit, and affection of his former epistles.

Ah! yes, it is very certain, that not only some, but all our finest poets, frequently invert the position of the verb, and prove that the British Critic, who says it is not the habit of good writers, is a stranger to their compositions. When Thomson says,

> "Vanish the woods, the dim seen river seems
> Sullen and slow, to roll his misty train,"

it is picture; which it would not have been, if he had coldly written,

> "The woods are vanish'd,"

since, in the former, by the precedence of the verb to the noun, we see the fog in the very act of shrouding the woods; but to these constituent excellencies of poetry, the eye of a reviewer is the mole's dim curtain. Again, in the same poem, Autumn, this inversion is beautifully used, while its author is paying, in a simile, the finest compliment imaginable to the talents and excursive spirit of his countrymen:

> "As from their own clear north, in radiant streams,
> Bright over Europe bursts the Boreal morn."

And what spirit does Pope often give his lines, by using this inversion in the imperative mood:

> "Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise."

Then, as to the imputed affectation of the word Lyceum, Thomson calls the woods "Nature's vast Lyceum." For his purpose it was necessary to elevate the term by its epithet, for mine to lower it by that which I applied—*minute* Lyceum; and in neither place is its application affected. I am allowed to be patient of criticism, and trust no one is readier to feel its force, and, when just, to acknowledge and to profit by it; but to a censor

who does not know the meaning of the word *thrill*, I may, without vanity, exclaim

" Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests!" .

Have you seen Mrs Inchbald's late work, Nature and Art. She is a favourite novelist with me. Her late work has improbable situations, and is inferior to her Simple Story, which ought to have been the title of this composition, to which it is better suited than to the history of Dorriforth :—yet we find in Art and Nature the characteristic force of her pen, which, with an air of undesigning simplicity, places, in a strong point of view, the worthlessness of such characters as pass with the world for respectable. She seems to remove, as by accident, their specious veil, and without commenting upon its removal :—and certain strokes of blended pathos and horror, indelibly impress the recollection.

But, with yet greater powers than Mrs Inchbald's, does the author of Caleb Williams grapple our attention. I conceive that he said to himself—" I will write a book that shall have no prototype, yet the taste of the age for the marvellous shall be humoured. Female pens have given us ruined castles, tolling bells, lights that

palely gleaming, make darkness visible; whispering voices from viewless forms, and beckoning shadows. That ground is pre-occupied. Let me try if I cannot harrow readers, who have mind, with dread and breathless expectation, without exciting supernatural ideas, and even without the assistance of enamoured interests." If such was his design, the success is complete. Yet has his work many defects; and we perceive his pernicious principles to be those of an absurd and visionary anarchist, who would open all the prison doors, and let thieves and murderers walk at large, in the hope of philosophizing them into virtue.

I learn, with regret, that Mr Mason is going to print a new work of his by a private press, for his friends only. This resolve, doubtless, resulted from disgust to the idea of seeing his compositions subject to the ignorance and effrontery of Review-impertinence, which assumes the right of supposing, that its fabricators understand verse-making better than the first poets of our age;—even than he,

> "Whom, on old Humber's bank, the Muses bore,
> And nurs'd his youth along the marshy shore."

LETTER XLVII.

Miss Wingfield.

Lichfield, July 19, 1796.

I am hopeless of being able to visit you this summer. Arbitrary disorder shapes for me another course, wide of the Severn banks—but it is not to the sea. No "moon, bursting from a cloud, will brighten for me the foamy side of a wave, amid the dark-heaving ocean." When it shall again be given me to behold, as you and I once beheld together, that fine description of Ossian's realized, I shall think of the kind friend whose arm supported my frame, while her gentle spirit shared my enthusiasm, from a sight so sublimely impressive.

You heard me speak of my purpose to have an Eolian harp, made upon the construction of Miss Ponsonby's, mentioned in my poem, Langollen Vale. She was so good to give me an exact drawing of hers; which, being three times the size they are usually made, and with twenty-two strings, instead of the usual number, six, far transcends, both in the quantity and quality of the

tone, the general order of these airy instruments. Mine is at length finished and strung; but, being made to fit my only eastern sash-windows, no gale has yet blown from that point, strong enough to wake the sullen slumber of its many chords. This line, from Il Penseroso, is to be its motto:

"Most musical, most melancholy."

Doubtless the airy hand of Eurus will soon awaken those rich harmonies, which so divinely stole upon my ear amid the Vale of Langollen.

And now I must proudly boast to you of Lord Bagot's goodness. He has honoured me with an obliging billet, accompanied by a very acceptable literary present. It is a superb book.—A German poem, entitled Leonora, and translated by Mr Spenser. I apprehend the fine poetic talents of that gentleman have done much more than justice to the sublimity of his author's ideas. This tale of despairing love, reaches the *ne-plus-ultra* of horrific greatness. Have you seen, in any of the various translations, the grand equestrian spectre they present? It has either already froze, or it will freeze, your young blood. Before I received this superior version, another, in a simpler style, had impressed me extremely; and I now

think that, in one or two passages, it transcends Mr Spenser's; but, on the whole, there is no comparison. O! yes, it is in his language, aided by the magic pencil of his aunt, Lady Diana Beauclerk, that the grand effect upon the imagination is complete. So very finely has she seized, and presented to actual vision, the most striking moments in this extraordinary poetic scene, as to vie with the best attempts of our great painters, who, with emulative pencil, have embodied the ideas of Shakespeare.

I observed that, in one or two places, I thought the first and simpler version of this poem, transcends Mr Spenser's generally more spirited, more elevated paraphrase—particularly here:

"It creeps, the swarthy funeral train,
The corse is on the bier!
Like croak of toads from lonely moor,
It slowly meets the ear*."

"Blacken'ing the night, a funeral train
On a cold bier a coffin brings,
Their slow pace measur'd to a strain
Sad as the saddest night-bird sings†."

* From Leonora, a Ballad, from Burger. See Monthly Magazine for March 1790. Translator anonymous.—*S.*

† From Mr Spenser's Translation of Leonora.—*S.*

The epithet *cold* for the bier, adding nothing to the solemnity of the spectacle, rather weakens than strengthens it. It is so with all epithets that do not either strongly paint, or express strength of feeling. This consciousness has induced incompetent and shallow critics to condemn them almost totally;—not aware that frequently all the sublimity arises from the epithet;—as, for instance, "Death on his pale horse," since an horse is not in itself an object of terror:—but the essential sublimity of this line, "The corse is on the bier," would have been enfeebled *by* any epithet, because the human body, lifeless, is in itself an object so dismal, so ghastly, that, once presented to the imagination, all descriptive appellations are superfluous. Also, the simile of the nightingale for the death-psalm, is not in keeping with the general horror of the scene;—that of "toads croaking from the lonely moors" is completely accordant. But the Spenser paraphrase, rich in general superiorities, need not grudge to its rival the transcendence of one or two passages.

I thing there is a desideratum in the poem itself, which is not supplied by either of the beforementioned translations, though finely supplied by the pencil of Lady D. Beauclerk. The poetry, which so sublimely describes the dread appear-

ance of the transformed warrior, leaves wholly to the imagination the effect of such a spectacle on Leonora, except signifying that it was fatal to her, in these lines:

> " Leonora's heart, its life-blood dried,
> Hangs quivering on the dart of death."

The lines are fine, but give no distinct picture. It appears to me, that a verse, to this effect, is almost demanded, when the skeleton, armed with a death-dart, is presented to the mind and eye at once, by the united powers of the poet and the painter.

> " Back on the maid he turns severe!
> She shrieks—and, with arrested breath,
> Clos'd eyes, and wild reverted hair,
> Falls fainting from the horse of Death.
>
> And, as she falls, the barbed spear
> Eternal makes her clay-cold swoon.——
> The dark grave yawns! a coffin near!
> Its white plates glimmer to the moon!"

I do not apologize for these remarks, even if you should have previously seen this tremendous composition. People who have mind, cannot soon be weary of a theme at once so novel and sublime. Adieu!

LETTER XLVIII.

Miss Ponsonby.

Buxton, Aug. 7, 1796.

My dear Madam,—Always gratified and honoured by your letters, I received the last with augmented pleasure, by the dispersion of solicitude. That attention which yourself and excellent Lady Eleanor are so good to express for my health, seduces me into the egotism of making it my earliest theme. I left Lichfield on the 24th of last month, passing three days, on my road hither, with Mr and Mrs Sneyd of Belmont. Their scene is of romantic and noble features, mountainous and sylvan. The changed, and perhaps purer air, seemed instantly salutary to me; nor has that of Buxton been less propitious, even amidst these gales of ungenial chilliness, that whistle through the arcade, and the drizzling clouds, that draw, from day to day, their dark trains over the mountains.

Lovely, interesting Mrs Powys of Berwick is my next door-neighbour in the Crescent. I have had the pleasure of passing a few pleasing hours

in her society; and she has procured for me a gratification, which has been an object with me, ever since she recommended, two years ago, the perusal of Rosina, which, she assured me, was an highly ingenious novel. Ingenious composition is always delightful to me, under whatever title it appears; but my supreme horror is a common novel. Praised by Mrs Powys, it was impossible Rosina could be of that class. It was, in the interim, promised me this time and that, but has, till now, always proved an *ignis-fatuus* to my pursuit. I have just finished the third volume, and am extremely pleased with it. Hitherto the characters are strongly marked, the style various and appropriate—the maxims interspersed are impressive, just, and consequently useful. I have seen the extreme disadvantage that results to every work, as to speedy celebration, from being published without the name of its author, except if it is the known, though unavowed, production of some literary character already celebrated. That Rosina has not been mentioned to me by a number of ingenious people, must have resulted from their not having read it, because published anonymously—unless, indeed, that the frequent quotations, with which it honours my writings, must have gratified me more than they perhaps wished I should be gratified. Dear Ladies, if

you have not read, I hope you will read Rosina. It must fall off strangely on its progress not to deserve that honour.

Buxton is growing very full, notwithstanding this unnatural weather. I now sit writing by a good fire, in very commodious lodgings. My neat light parlour looks backward, is on the first flight of stairs, and, from its aspect, is quiet and silent. When I close one of the sash-windows, that looks on the superb stables, which are built on the rise of the hill, above this splendid, this golden half-moon, the other window shows me only a sloping range of bare fields, without hedge or tree, and intersected by stone-walls. They present a perfect picture of a barren country, of rudeness, silence, and solitude. I am gratified by meditating the striking contrast, when, quitting this apartment, half a minute conveys me into the "busiest hum of men;" amid a crowd of old and young, grave and gay, feeble and frolicksome, blighted and blooming, that sweep, in long trains, through the arcade; while, in the area of its concave, horses and horsemen are prancing, and chariots and phaetons swiftly roll.

You have taken an infinite deal of obliging trouble, in transcribing for me Mr Williams's translation of the Runic poem, which I paraphrased in my late publication. I am shocked to

think that my curiosity should be gratified at such an expence of time, precious as Miss Ponsonby's —but what an admirable specimen of perfect skill in penmanship is this transcript!—the modern print-hand, that of the ancient black-letter type, and the Roman, are proofs of very uncommon skill. The poetry of the translation does not please me. The expressions of Dr Hicks's prose-translation are miserably below the ideas, and entirely inadequate to their grandeur. No version, close as this, could possess either impressive solemnity, or poetic elevation.

What rank does Sir Brooke Boothby's muse hold in your and Lady Eleanor's estimation, whose appreciation of talents is so unerring, except where the generous partialities of friendship conceal defect, and magnify whatever has the least claim to approbation?

With affectionate compliments to the "sister of your heart," I remain, dearest Madam, &c.

LETTER XLIX.

MR SAVILLE.

Buxton, August, 8, 1796.

THANK you, dear friend, for your welcome letter of this morning—but I grieve to find that the enervating days return so often. O! that the ocean breezes and billows may give you strength to repel these lamentably frequent invasions. I mourn, and most for your sake, the strange continuance of that unnatural weather, which long so severely balanced the winter's mildness. What would have become of the harvest, if the sun had persevered in his sullenness?

I have here great plenty of very pleasant society, and have received flattering attentions from many interesting and elegant strangers in this motley throng; but dear Lady Lawley's kindness to me, gratifies what I hope is a much better thing than my vanity—for my heart values on experience, the excellence of her understanding, the integrity of her principles, and the benevolence of her heart;—and the lovely and fascinating Mrs Powys of Berwick!—you know how I have al-

mired and loved her, since the blended dignity and sweetness of her manners, the cultivation of her mind, and the apparent softness of her heart, first charmed me, at Lichfield, this time two years.

Certainly my acquaintance here seem to set a far higher value on my talents and conversation, such as they are, than the Lichfieldians;—but it is more than probable, that novelty is the cause of this so much more appreciating attention. In an intercourse so transient, that to day is, and will next week perhaps cease for ever, the passions of jealousy, envy, and ill-will, have not time to arise, or if arisen, to gather strength by habit and daily nurture. The homage of this attention, therefore, neither beguiles my reason, or counteracts my experience. I know human nature is everywhere, in a great degree at least, the same; that by frequent intercourse the value of talents, somewhat above the common level, is first lessened in the estimation of every-day minds, who can so readily attain that intercourse; and that, when lessened, such minds become jealous and indignant from seeing others pay the tribute of respect, which is ever largely paid to abilities that are at all distinguished, on an early introduction to them, before repetition has blunted the appetite for intellectual emanations, or the hourly recurrence of conscious inferiority has created and nursed latent dislike.

But amongst this motley group, I have been honoured with the notice of many people of rank, and of others whose talents have the widest celebrity. I am in a society which makes me vexedly feel the rapid flight of those weeks, whose period must close an intellectual intercourse very gratifying. I converse with Mr Wilberforce, who disappoints no expectation his imputed eloquence had excited—with the luminous and resistless Erskine, whose every sentence is oratory, whose form is graceful, whose voice is music, and whose eye lightens as he speaks.

That resemblance to Mrs Fitzherbert, with which I have been so variously, so repeatedly flattered, was observed by the polite, obliging, and agreeable Lady Harewood, last night, who has taken me to each assembly since I had first the honour of her notice.

So I think I will even go to Brighton instead of Harrowgate, to see if I cannot rival Lady Jersey, by recalling former impressions, and make a certain personage behave better to his amiable and lovely wife. Would not that be a nice piece of amorous knight or rather knightess errantry? My autumnalities would scarcely be an objection to a taste so partial to mellow fruit. It is a sign I am better for Buxton, thus to jest upon my feeble

frame, and arrogate to it, though but in sport, a royal conquest.

A week ago, we had a sudden transition from hybernal coldness to skies of cloudless blaze. Phœbus shakes his fiery tresses on the rocks, and over the wide-stretched mountains, that girdle this vale and its golden Crescent. The busy little world, that swarms in the Arcade and its precincts, now gasp beneath a climate, which I should suppose somewhat resembles the description of Mulciber's gilded palace in Pandemonium. The aspect of the Crescent is south-east. Its colonnade drinks the morning beams, and reflects them back with dazzling and oppressive force. Those to whom the lines of Milton are familiar, might be inclined to exclaim,

> ——— "The torrid walls, vaulted with fire,
> Smite on their dazzled eyes."

As for you, you are a salamander, and no atmosphere can be too glowing—besides, you have the ocean breezes. Adieu!

LETTER L.

Mrs Price.

Harrowgate, Sept. 1, 1796.

I am indebted to you, my dear Madam, for a kind letter, precious from its sympathy with my feelings, and interesting from that which it creates with yours.

You know it was my purpose to go to Harrowgate this summer. A rheumatic weakness, and pain in my ancles, induced me to try a previous residence at Buxton. Though I staid there a month, I am not sensible of much benefit in the disorder for which I went thither; yet my general health must have been strengthened by drinking the waters and bathing, or I could not have supported the gay and hurrying life I led there. Fancying I should find myself an utter stranger at Buxton, how little did I divine the many old acquaintance I should meet, the many new ones I should form! Rather full when I arrived, the crowds soon augmented to swarming numbers. The balls to which I subscribed and constantly attended, were very brilliant. I frequently went

to them in Lady Harewood's party, once Lady Fleming, to whom I was introduced by my long dear and esteemed Lady Lawley. Lady Harewood is a second Madam D'Enclos, as to grace and agility of form and fashionable appearance in advanced life. She has an extreme fine person, and her manners are charming, easy, polite, animated, conciliating.

Miss Mildred Lawley was the pride of the ball-room. Except on the opera stage, I never saw any woman dance half so well. Her steps, skilful and curiously varied, are free, bounding, and exactly responsive to the music. She seems to tread in air—and shames the silly compliance of some of her fair competitors with a late absurd edict of that fool Fashion, who bids them, perhaps irrecoverably, sacrifice all the grace of their dancing to what is called the *partridge run*. It gives one the idea of their legs being tied together, and fighting in vain under their petticoats, to escape from the awkward bondage, beneath which the whole frame shakes as in an ague-fit. We may observe to such, as we are gazing delighted on Miss Lawley,

> "Learn the grace with which she strays,
> Thro' the light fantastic maze!"

while on her open and joyous countenance, we see no trace of solicitude for the eclat of her steps.

Mrs Childers and I renewed the acquaintance of our teens, which had began at Shrewsbury, in that jocund morning of our youth. We have not met since. She was then the blooming and pretty Sally Fowler of Ascham. Time has trod so lightly over her fair face, and yet elegant form, as to have left few traces of depredation, while naturally fine talents, and energy of disposition, did not suffer him to pass in vain over her mind, but snatched from his wings the stores of intellectual cultivation. Hence the charms of brilliant wit, of classic and historic allusion, inspirit her conversation, while the fairest domestic virtues render her estimable. A month's daily intercourse, and frequent confidential tete-à-tetes, have made our acquaintance friendship.

The enchanting Mr Erskine honoured me with frequent attentions in the ball-rooms, and with frequent visits at my lodgings, where he often met the excellent and distinguished Mr Wilberforce, and Mr Wilberforce's friend, the ingenious Dean of Carlisle. It was a triumvirate of eloquence Their different politics drew forth their mutual powers, very amicably exerted. They were in my parlour the day before I came away, from eleven

till one in the morning; from six till nine in the evening. Mrs Childers shared with me the whole of that mental banquet, and other company in turn dropt in.—It was an Attic day.

I am now at Harrowgate—O! what a change! the master of the Green Dragon, to whom I had written for accommodations, and who had replied that he would do the best for me he could, said, when I arrived, that he had tried in vain—Harrowgate was so full, he could not procure me even a single lodging-room. Thus cruelly disappointed, I had recourse to the people of the Granby hotel, upon whom, not having written to them, I had no claim. They made me the same reply; but, with more humanity, seeing my distress, sent about to the lodging-houses, and at last, with much difficulty, got for me a single bed-chamber, with a smaller one within for my maid, a quarter of a mile from their hotel, from whence I am to have my food sent. This room, vacant only from its meanness and inconvenience, was damp, and I have caught a violent feverish cough, and inflammation on my lungs, disabling me from going to the hotel. If this disorder, to which I am subject, remains upon me with its usual violence and obstinacy, it will force me to return home very soon. I shall abandon the probable benefit of the waters with regret, but shall feel none for not

having presented myself in a crowded society of fine people, amongst whom I am not conscious of a single acquaintance.

Here is scarce room for an adieu; but your confidence in my affection will supply the deficiencies of my exhausted paper.

LETTER LI.

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER.

Mansfield Woodhouse, Sept. 19, 1796.

DEAREST Lady Eleanor, what a touching, what an unhappy narrative does your last obliging letter contain! Lamentable is the malady of the amiable visionary, whose imagination has fatally soared above the limits of her reason, and, like the chariot-wheel, taken baleful fire from the rapidity of its course.

Mr Saville and his daughter have, I imagine, by this time exchanged the Welsh coast for Mr Roberts' sublime mountain, and have perhaps enjoyed the envied happiness of paying their glad duty at the Arcadian court of Langollen.

Your Ladyship's kind and desired letter found

me at Harrowgate, labouring under the paroxysms of a fierce cough, the luckless present of damp and inconvenient lodgings, which the neglect of the landlord at the Green Dragon Hotel, and the overflowing crowds in all the other houses, public and private, had made my dernier resort.

The morning after my arrival, finding myself much disordered, I resigned my purpose of going to the Granby for my meals, determining to send for my food from thence, and trying to combat my disease by quiet and regularity. My apartment itself, when it became aired, was not uncomfortable, but tolerably clean, spacious, and very lightsome, from a large sash window, which looked upon some pleasant retired fields; with a side view of the heathy-moor, round which the three hotels, the better lodging-houses, the theatre, and the shops, are thinly dotted, and over which pranced the horses and carriages, and walking parties of those gay crowds that swarmed in the hotels. My room was part of an house which had seen better days, once the Salutation Hotel, now occupied, in division, by handicraft workmen.

There, during an whole week, I lived, unknowing and unknown, in a seclusion never in my whole preceding life experienced. A total solitude on the very verge of so busy a little world, pleased

me at once by its novelty, and by the leisure it gave me. The numbers passing to and fro on one side, seemed as figures in a magic lantern. I was very much disordered, it is true, yet, by quiet and nursing, not so ill as to be insensible to the luxury of uninterrupted leisure, and abstract contemplation. I had some books with me, and also the task of making a copy for the press of my centenary of sonnets, and of my twenty-five paraphrases of the Odes of Horace. As the Spa was a long mile distant, I had the water brought me every morning in bottles. I rose at seven, and swallowed, at intervals of twenty minutes between each draught, three half pints of that superlatively nauseous fluid, impregnated with salt and sulphur, that makes it taste like putrid eggs. By the medical people of the place, it is prohibited during a cold; but, from the nature of the operation, I knew that to be professional and local cant, adopted for the purpose of detaining strangers. My cough was always softened by it during several ensuing hours, and it entirely averted those pangs in my head, always, till then, the concomitants of catarrhs with me.

In the periods between swallowing those odious potations, I walked in the pleasant solitary fields which my chamber windows fronted. The busy throng of the circular heath, from whence

these fields diverge, never approached. At morn and noon, the sun looked silently on their pathways and hedges; a silence unbroken, except by the lowing of the cattle and the warble of the redbreast.

Much did I enjoy those placid contemplative walks from the edge of that whirling vortex, into which, approaching it, I glanced without one wish to enter. In the sharp and often frosty evenings, which were then become somewhat long, I sat by my lonely, yet cheerful fire, without finding them tedious.

Thus was my disorder kept at bay an whole week, during which I did not once inquire who were the distinguished luminaries of the busy sphere so near me, nor suspected that it contained a single acquaintance; but, at the week's end, brilliant Lady Glencairn, with whom I had the honour of passing an hour three years ago, the sister of Mr Erskine in spirit, as well as in blood, wrote to express joy in the just received intelligence of my being in Harrowgate, and concern for my indisposition, and her intention to call upon me. The charm of Lady G.'s society was a temptation I could not resist; but, allured by the friendly offer of constant access to her parlour, I sacrificed that retirement, so necessary till the crisis of my disease was past, and ventured, the

four ensuing days, to dine at the hotel. The immense crowd of the public table, the heat, the noise, were more than I could sustain without perceivable injury, increased by the cold walks home to my lodgings, at nine every evening. The afternoons were passed in private with Lady Glencairn and a few of her friends; yet notwithstanding the intellectual sun which gilded that little city of refuge, as we used to call Lady Glencairn's parlour, my illness increased rapidly, and induced a sudden resolution, the fifth morning of these days of gratified mind and fevered body, to fly, while flight should be in my power.—So terminated my expedition to Harrowgate.

My cough and fever abated beneath the influence of travelling in very fine days, which shone brightly upon my residence at Chesterfield. The autumnal fogs, heavy and dense, seem now beginning to gather. At present, they roll away towards noon—but probably the sun will soon lose his power to dissipate them, and to gild the embowering shades by which I am now veiled; while the society of their mistress, one of the oldest of my friends, has kindness and intelligence which might illuminate the darkest hours of winter.

I have the honour to remain, &c.

LETTER LII.

Mr Saville.

Mansfield Woodhouse, Sept. 19, 1796.

I THANK God for the hitherto safe course of a journey that now bends homewards. Ever welcome is that consciousness; for pleasant are my domestic bowers, and dear are the friends whose society gilds them. Yesterday evening, by six, I arrived at rural Woodhouse, the village of acknowledged beauty, and was welcomed with all that energetic affection, which has ever marked good Mrs Mompessan's attachment to me.

By this time, I trust you, and your fair syren, are breathing the pure gales of our friends Mr and Mrs Roberts' sublime mountain,

" High towering in Langollen's beauteous vale."

I have said its air, compared to that of flatter countries, is as the taste of Pyrmont to common water. O! that its effect may be salubrious to you, augmenting the benefits of coast-residence!

When I arose, at seven this morning, the sun was veiled in heavy autumnal mists. By eight, they rolled away, and the orb looked out in golden beauty. I hastened to ascend the steep little lawn, that immediately rises from the low-roofed, but pleasant old mansion, and at whose top commences the pretty shrubbery which winds, as I have before described to you, round a field of about two acres.

Inclined, however, to Dr Ingenhouz's system, I fear the whole of this scene is somewhat too luxuriantly embowered to make the mansion, which stands low, perfectly healthy, especially at this season,

> "When the less wholesome gales of autumn blow,
> And shake the ripe fruit from the bending bough."

The breath of decaying vegetables must be pernicious, when blending too profusely with that of the horizon; but I hope I shall not perceive any bad effects from that circumstance, though my lungs must be in a tender and irritable state, from the fierce cough which has agitated them during the last three weeks.

I passed ten days very agreeably at Chesterfield, with my friends Doctor and Mrs Stokes; though my spirits were often painfully depressed by the consciousness of being surrounded with

unhappy sufferers, who, in the direst of all human diseases, cancer, were assembled there, allured by the reputation of an American physician, Dr Tete, now resident in that town, having been sent for across the Atlantic by a Chesterfield gentleman to his beloved wife, labouring under its baleful influence. Dr Tete either has, or pretends to have, a medical secret, of powerful efficacy, to expel that venom from the blood; but numbers have died under his experiments, and all have suffered so severely, that I think nothing could induce me to become his patient, though he has dismissed some few, whom, with setons in the diseased part, which are to be kept open some months, he declares cured, and they countenance that declaration. I conversed frequently, during my stay at Chesterfield, with several of his patients, who seemed full of hope and dependence upon his skill, and warmly desirous of increasing the number of those who commit themselves to the power of his nostrum, merciless as it is. As for me, though I have found the pains resulting from my accident, March was two years, so obstinate, and frequent in their recurrence, yet, at least while the regular physicians and surgeons declare their belief that these pains are not of the dreaded nature, it would be madness in me to rush blindly into torturing experiments, with-

out faith in their power to save, and merely from the persuasions of boundless credulity, that, by the influence of hope, smiles beneath its pangs.

On Saturday, a Mr and Mrs Jebb, cousin of the present Sir Richard Jebb, and of the late amiable and distinguished Dr John Jebb, took Mrs Stokes and myself in their carriage to pay an interesting visit to the father of Mr Jebb, living in a little Eden of his own creation, some two miles from Chesterfield. Every tree of those woods that curtain his swelling hill, was planted by his own hands. If this venerable gentleman lives till February twelvemonth, he will have completed his century, and if he lives till February three years, he will have lived in three centuries. He is the greatest wonder of intelligence so nearly centennial, that perhaps ever existed; for he has no chimeras in his brain, like the Lichfield wonder, old Fletcher, and his memory is perfectly sound, not only concerning long past, but very recent transactions. It is within the last year only, that his limbs are become too feeble to walk farther than across the room. Till then, he maintained the habit, which commenced on his retiring from business to this rural retreat, fifty years ago, the habit of rising at five during the spring, summer, and autumnal months, and, "with his pipe in his mouth, walking stoutly over his hill,

and lending new perfumes to the breath of the morning;" continuing his walk, when the weather permitted, near two hours. His teeth are all gone, and their desertion has impaired his utterance a little, but he is neither defective in sight, or hearing, in any marked degree.

I cannot express with what an awed tenderness I was affected, when this very reverend personage rose, with mild grace, to receive me. He is a perfect Nestor in eloquence. "Madam," said he, "I am glad to see you.—I remember your father a sprightly bachelor.—I travelled down from London with him, when he went to take possession of the living of Eyam. He was a *lovely* man, of a fine person and frank communicative spirit. Soon after that period, he married a beautiful young Lady, your mother, Madam. Mr Seward, as you know, had travelled, and spoke admirably of the customs and manners of foreign nations."

I wept with pleasure at this testimony of respect, this justice to my father's memory, from a character thus venerable. He indulged my inquiries after the habits of a life protracted to that uncommon length, and so singularly illuminated by the duration of the mental powers.

"Madam, I was not naturally a strong man;—so feeble till sixteen, that my mother despaired of my arriving at manhood. The virulent disorder

that fled about me, settled in my hand about that period, and obliged me to suffer this amputation (extending his left hand) of my fore-finger. After that time I had no violent disease, but I was never strong, never enjoyed robust health;—neither was I at any time guilty of excesses; nor eat nor drunk immoderately; abstained from meat suppers; went early to rest, and rose early; was seldom out of my bed at ten in the evening, or in it after five in the fine seasons, or after seven in the winter, and dined at two o'clock. I am glad I was not born in this strange unnatural period, in which all the great and wealthy, and most of the middle ranks of life, like their own ways better than God's ways;—exhaust themselves by sitting up and revelling through the night, and enervate themselves by late, and some by noon-tide slumberings. Madam, they shut their eyes upon the flush and resplendence of the day; rob their bodies of the strengthening power of the early and fresh gales, and their minds of the pleasure of watching the joyous comforts, which the fresh and bright hours diffuse upon the animal world, that act under instinct. It was always my delight to see the busy birds collecting their food for themselves and for their young, with gay industry;—to hearken to their songs, and to the lowings of the cattle at

early day, and to imagine them hymns to God of thankfulness and praise."

Here was an old man of ninety-eight!—who thus poured on my charmed ear, though in the tremulous and piping tones of second personal childhood, the blended oratory of an elevated imagination, and a feeling and pious heart.

He told me also, that it had been his annual custom, till this year, that he thought himself too infirm for the attempt, to take a summer's journey, either to Matlock, Buxton, Cheltenham, or some of the coasts. "Last year, Madam," continued he, "on the 21st of August, I set out for Scarborough, and there breathed the sea-air in my carriage, during twenty days. I always thought those journies renovated my aged body, and the sea-air revived me last year."

I asked after the quantity and the nature of his liquor.—"When I grew very old, the physicians ordered me three glasses of white-wine after dinner, and three after supper; but, of late years, I have drank only two after dinner, and not any after supper."

By a physician's order, Sir, did you lessen the quantity of vinous fluid at so advanced a period of life?

"Yes, Madam, by that of a very able physician, —Dr Experience."

Observe the quickness, as well as good sense of the reply; there could be no parrotism.—O! that it would please God so to lengthen your days, my friend!

> "To age, thus melting in scarce felt decay,
> Gliding in modest innocence away."

I am convinced, the sensibility and piety of your heart would administer similar cordials of grateful and happy sympathy, with the felicity which results to instinctive creation from the bounties of its Maker;—and surely such cordials are highly propitious to the vital powers. They are the wine of the spirit, and the exhilaration they inspire strengthens while it stimulates. No baneful lassitude succeeds their inebriation. But I fear you will never have resolution to acquire the habit of ten o'clock retreat, and of early rising, so essential to health, in declining life particularly.

Bracing and restorative is the fresh morning air, and salutary are the slumbers which precede the midnight. I wish we could all learn to live naturally—we should then live happier, better, and longer.

LETTER LIII.

MRS CHILDERS, of Cantly Lodge, Yorkshire.

Lichfield, Oct. 10, 1796.

I AM happy, dearest Madam, in performing that promise, which resulted from the most animated and inseresting impressions. Your society was the sweetest spell that enchanted my residence at Buxton. It will influence me long,—yes, always.

Did Mr Erskine tell you of our accidental rencounter on the Chatsworth road, half a mile from Middleton, on the morning I left the golden Crescent, through which you and I so often walked together. I believed him in that gay throng, and he thought me much farther on my way to Sheffield, which I had forsaken to visit an old servant. After staying with her an hour, my wheels were retracing their wandering course through those lanes, where rocks and cliffs, covered with dwarf-wood, rise from the curving Derwent, that foams at their base.

I said to my maid,—What an elegant figure is that gentleman approaching us, who, loitering with

a book, now reads and now holds the volume in a dropt hand, to contemplate the fine views on his right! There seems mind in every gesture, every step;—and how like Mr Erskine!

A few seconds converted resemblance into reality. After a mutual exclamation, the graceful Being stopt the chaise, opened the door, and putting one foot on the step, poured all his eloquence upon a retrospect of the hours we had passed together at Buxton; illuminating, as he flatteringly said, one of those seldom intervals of his busy life, in which his mind was left to enjoy, undisturbed, the luxury of intellectual intercourse.

A sudden scheme of the preceding night to go to Chatsworth that day, with Mrs and Miss Erskine, and a large party; and they being obliged to wait at Middleton for some returning horses, induced him to beguile the hour of waiting by that ramble, which had given us such an unexpected interview.

When people have any cordiality towards each other, such interventions of chance are right pleasant. At the instant they act upon the spirits like wine; and, as time rolls on, their recollection gilds the mind, as sun-beams a placid lake.

The weather was extremely fine on my two days journey to Harrowgate. You know how rich the prospects upon the confines of Yorkshire.

Landscape is always exquisite in the tracks which intervene betwixt the barren grandeur of a mountainous country, and the rankly lavish vegetation of a flat one. It acquires a sufficient portion of the luxuriance of the last, before it has lost the majesty of the former. Our harvest, exuberant beyond what I had ever seen, was in its ripe glory. The dark woods on the yet in a degree mountainous hills, waved over vast fields, whose yellow and bearded ears, undulating to the gales, seemed lakes of fluid amber—while in others already reapt, the jocund sheaves stood like youthful couples marshalling for the dance;—and, on the green-sloping uplands, the corn, sown in stripes, gave me the idea of gold lace on the borders, and up the seams of a birth-night beau in the olden time, ere fashion had spurned that splendid distinction. Thus did I amuse myself in forming fanciful resemblances for the bounty of Ceres, seldom more wanted, and never more plenteous.

At three on Saturday, we arrived at the gate of Harewood Park, and found a *silver* key to open it. The drive from thence to the house, as you probably well know, involves some of the most beautiful part of that scenery, consecrated by poetic description in Mason's Elfrida. You are conscious as myself, how to minds, alive to the powers of poetry—to recollection that glows

with its recorded graces, it can inspirit the contemplation of those actual scenes it has described, and, describing, has rendered classic ground.—It is the poet's triumph. That evening, the poignancy of my sensations rendered it eminently his, who reposes on his immortal laurels in the bowers of Aston. As Harewood's glassy waters shone through tangled brakes in the glens, or, expanded into lake, slept on the lawn, I repeate I to myself the lovely passages that paint the landscape, or allude to its beauties, in that fine dramatic poem.

You will conceive with what comparative sobriety of spirit I surveyed the artificial splendours of the seventeen state-rooms in Harewood House. Fine apartments have little charm for me, if genius has not storied the walls. One pleasing sensation rose above the placid level of that survey, when the graceful portrait of the Dowager Lady Harewood caught my eye, who had been so kindly obliging to me on my recent abode at Buxton. It resembles her strongly, amidst all the flattery of its lineaments and colouring. Her form it scarcely could flatter, though it has veiled on her face the depredations of time.

Ah! I have this moment heard that dear Lady Glencairn, whom I left rejoicing in letters of health from her Lord, received an express, in a

few days after we parted, announcing his dangerous illness at Edinburgh. The papers of last week, they tell me, announced his death. My heart mourns for her—for she loved him.—Melancholy impermanence of human blessings! Adieu, dear Mrs Childers—lasting as lively be your happiness!

LETTER LIV.

Miss Wingfield.

Lichfield, Oct. 29, 1796.

My dear Miss Wingfield confesses that she had been disappointed in the perusal of Ossian, and requests my opinion of that celebrated work. I must acknowledge that no poetry is more dear to me;—that I think Macpherson's must be a consummate translation, since it glows with the strength, spirit, and grace of original composition.

The tedium, which resulted to your first and only perusal of Ossian's works, will perhaps generally be felt by people of the best taste, who, on their primal examination of them, read them as they

would do any other work—regularly, and with long-continued attention. We find Ossian admirable for his wild sublimity of landscape, and for those original and pensive traits of description, that sweetly delineate the lonely beauties of an uncultivated and mountainous country.—Admirable, for sentiments at once tender and exalted, concise and impressive; where often a single word conveys the whole generous meaning to the heart of the reader—as where Fingal, the most serenely magnanimous of the heroes of poetic celebration, after having conquered and taken captive his enemy, Swaran, releases him ransomless, from remembering that Agandeca, the sister of that monarch, saved his life, by disclosing to him her inhospitable father's design to violate, by assassination, the feast of truce, when Fingal was a young hero, under its protection; and that her own life was the victim of that disclosure. Fingal thus emancipates his captive foe: "Raise thy white sails to the wind, thou brother of Agandeca!"

How beautifully is the reader reminded of that transaction, previously related in an episode, by that one line,—and of Fingal's unextinguished affection and recording gratitude, by the single word brother.

It should be considered, that what seems a cloying repetition of description, imagery, and

simile, before repeated perusals have given accuracy to our attention, was the unavoidable consequence of Ossian's want of knowledge of other countries, beyond the districts of the contending chiefs;—of his ignorance of arts, of science, of agriculture. The sun, the moon, stars, and clouds, the mists, the winds, and their storms—the ocean, the lakes, the forests, and their deer;—that these were Ossian's only resources. It appears to me, that he makes them fully responsible for the produce of poetic excellence. Attentively considered, every description of these objects will be found presented with some peculiar feature, or in some new combination, which genius, sedulously observing nature, will always be able to present.

The morals of the benign heroes and of their mistresses, the daughters of the aged warriors, have a purity and greatness beyond what history or poetry have ascribed to those of more civilized nations; while their manners have unrivalled dignity, sentiment, and grace.

Then, surely, there is much grandeur as well as novelty, in the aërial mythology. We find the souls of the warriors on the mountain winds, in the tempests, or in the whirlwind, according to the nature of their earthly character and manners. Those of the softer sex, are fair spirits of the hill; their robes are of the white clouds; their hair is

of the gilded mist, as they " glide in a sun-beam at noon, over the silence of Morven."

The local, rather than general name, being usually given to the mountain, forest, sea, and lake, is a custom highly favourable to poetry, and is more common to the Caledonian poets, even in later times, than to those of any other country, as their sweet songs evince.—" The bonny Bush of Traquair ;"—" the Birks of Invermay ;"—" the Braes of Yarrow ;"—" the Broom of Cowden-knows :"—As, in Ossian, " the green hills of Inisfail ;"—" the stormy heights of Morven ;"—" the streamy forest of Temora ;"—" the sea of Malmor, of Ullin, of Lochlin ;"—" the reedy lake of Lego."

Do not read Ossian long at once, but take it up often. It is, on intimacy, calculated to charm an heart like yours. " It is like the memory of times that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul."

LETTER LV.

Mrs Stokes.

Lichfield, Nov. 15, 1796.

I CONGRATULATE you on your beloved little girl having passed the danger, unfrequent as it is, of inoculation;—also on the failure of that ungenerous machination against the interests of Dr Stokes. Jealousy, as a rival in botanic authorism, or some pique respecting his consequence as a poet or philosopher, must have stimulated the assailant to an attempt so unworthy of his own character. I take pleasure in the warmth with which Dr Stokes' friends have repulsed the invasion. Mr Longston, in his reply to my application, expresses a desire to comply with its request, avowing, at the same time, his regret that Dr Stokes' political sentiments have been injurious to his interest. I observed, in answer, that it was strange that any gentleman's quiet opinions on the body-politic of England, could affect the confidence people might have in his care and skill respecting the body-natural of its inhabitants;—

that Dr Darwin's similar principles had not affected his professional practice.

I know what would be the probable and rational reply to the last remark—that Dr Darwin had been long established in high medical reputation, before the birth of that monstrous system which is disorganizing Europe, and turning loose upon society the corrupt passions of mankind; —that he is generally summoned from the preponderance of personal alarm, and involuntary confidence over dislike to his opinions, political or religious.

On inquiry, I find you would not like Abergelly as a coast-residence, next summer. There is no cheapness to recompense indifferent society, and the mile's distance from the sea. The way in which you, and also Mr and Mrs Zachary, lived at Barmouth, in private lodgings, and supplying your own provisions, was, I apprehend, as to cheapness, an unique in possibility.

My visit to Lady Lawley, in the beginning of this month, proved very pleasant. I was delighted to meet Lady Carhampton there, in unimpaired spirits, strength, faculties, and kindness, at eighty-four. Her strong mind has invariably expelled from her heart the serpent-toothed ingratitude of the present Lord, who has never paid one shilling of her jointure during the ten years since

his father died. This is the return she has met from him for having voluntarily, in her Lord's life-time, resigned to this ingrate an estate, in her own disposal, of L.4000 per annum: She would want bread, but for another estate, in her own right, of L.1000 annual income. She has obtained from Chancery repeated decrees in her favour, upon which he files cross bills; at one time, upon pretence of her having taken the family jewels, at another, the family pictures, though he knows she never attempted to take either, and has not a family gem or picture in her possession. Firm, indeed, must be that cheerfulness which "the laws delay" cannot sicken. Her excellent friend, Mrs Netterville, twenty years younger, is much more impaired in health and strength; while Lady C. is like a sunny frosty day in winter, her friend seems as a tree whose roots have been loosened by the winds of a stormy November.

Lichfield has been of late wonderous gay. Six private balls were given, which I was persuaded to attend. Our public assembly, last week, proved rich in rank and titles, and I thought it pleasant. Charming Lady Donegall diffused her benign lustre there. When she first became wife to the Marquis, I did not visit her, thinking it improbable that my company could either interest or amuse her. You know how averse I am to court-

ing the society of the great, aware how seldom it is obtained upon those terms of equality with which my spirit is too high to dispense; but the lovely Marchioness has lately expressed a desire to converse with me, which her good sense and virtues, more than her rank, renders flattering, at least in my estimation. I met her, by her own request, at Mr Dyott's, last Saturday; and her manners answered every expectation report had taught me to form of their sweetness and grace.

All you write on the subject of Colonel and Mrs ——— is beautiful. The picture the lady draws of her husband's mind in her letter, on which you comment, is so strangely, so extravagantly, and so darkly coloured, as to leave my experience and observation without the means of justifying it to nature and probability, by any approximation in the apparent feelings or conduct of others. It resembles nothing one knows, and nothing one has read of, except the Falkland of Caleb Williams. But there was a cause which, when revealed, fully accounts for the terrible gloom and sad dereliction of his spirit;—but that a disappointment in the enamoured affections, thirty-one years ago, in a man who had never, to their object, appeared a passionate lover; that it should operate, with unabating corrosiveness,

through such an immense lapse of time!—that its bitterness should have resisted the tender attentions of a wife, younger and lovelier than her whom he had lost, and indurate his feelings against the enlivening power of filial attentions, even from objects to whose welfare he was sedulously attentive!—all this seemed to me so inconceivable, that I concluded Mrs ——— had nursed an enthusiastic fancy, which causelessly imputed to unextinguished passion for another object, a constitutional and morbid discontent of heart and temper:—but the strange manner of his attempted visit last June, vouches for the reality of this represented, this long delirium. He inquired for me at the door, and sent up his name, Lieutenant-Colonel ———. I was dressing. My man-servant brought his card up stairs. While he did that, my housekeeper, coming up the stairs from the kitchen, saw a gentleman whom she did not know, stand at the foot of the next flight of stairs, looking up them with earnest melancholy eyes. Perceiving her, he went back into the hall; and when the man brought my message to request his going into the parlour, and to say that I would be down immediately, lo! he had vanished.

I found a letter from his lady on my return from my summer's excursion, in which she thus

speaks of that attempt to see me, so strangely renounced in the instant of making it.

" Of Colonel ——'s flying visit to you in June, I knew not a syllable till I learnt it from your letter—which, on perusing, I exclaimed, Good Heaven! how could you leave the place without seeing Miss S—— at last, since she was at home! He replied, with much solemnity, ' The momentary gratification must have been followed by regret and pain, that would sufficiently have punished the temerity of attempting to see her at all. I had no sooner entered the house, than I became sensible of my perilous state of feeling, and fled with precipitation."

Mrs ——— laments the abortion of this design, alleging reasons exactly similar to those you express, for wishing the renewal of our acquaintance. I regret it too, from a motive not acknowledged by either of you, though doubtless felt by both, viz. that it would have proved a spell-dissolving interview. He had then found in his Eloisa, that disenchanting change which St Preux could not find in Mrs Wolmar. An absence of ten and of thirty-one years are very different things. Small traces would have been perceived in me of that image so unhappily impressed on his mind, and which yet glows in the gay bloom of youth. If there is any reality in

this described infatuation, and Colonel ——— feels pain from it, why does he shun the infallible remedy—"the sensible and true avouch of his own eyes?"

You place the forbearing sweetness and patience of Mrs ———'s conduct in a very bright, yet not less just point of view. I feel such soothing uncomplaining endurance far above my attainment in a similar situation. Yet I wish she had abstained from partaking her husband's infatuation, and from the strange desire of even transcending its excess. It is painful to know that I have been, however innocently, the cause of misery to an estimable couple. Next to the desired non-existence of such insane constancy, I should have wished unconsciousness of an evil I know not how to remove, since Colonel ——— rejects the remedy that must obliterate the past, by enabling him to compare it with the present. For the lady—alas! it is much too late in life for me to meet the enthusiasm of such boundless partiality.

> ———"And in disparity,
> The one intense, the other still remiss,
> Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
> Tedious alike."

A rational and moderately affectionate esteem,

such as my heart might tell me was not wholly undeserved, would be a thousand times more welcome. Friendship should owe nothing to illusion; and all is illusion in Mrs ——— respecting me. She trusted the exaggerating portraits of infatuation, ingenuously given to her before she married the infatuated, and a fondness for my poetic writings has completed her generous mania. Adieu!

LETTER LVI.

EDMUND WIGLEY, ESQ.

Lichfield, Nov. 19, 1796.

ASSURED that Mr Wigley performs all his promises, he will permit me to thank him, in my own name and in that of our company, for his voice in our favour, which, I trust, will be repeated on the day of final contest with invading injustice, goaded by avarice and rival-hating envy. . .

What a wonderful performance is Mr Burke's late attempt to re-frenzy the nation!—What a blaze of imagination in the style and allusions!—What impressive, what alarming truths!—yet

what wild inconsistency of deduction!—Dark as are the colours in which he paints the demoniac state, I hardly think them of too lurid blackness, —but he also represents that state invincible, from the nature and even the enormity of its guilt;—yet adjures England to persist in breaking all the lances of her strength against its horrid and unassailable air-fans. Like an Indian wife, he would have her sacrifice herself upon the funeral-pile of justice, religion, and individual freedom, round which tyranny has lighted his hellish fires in France.

Mr Burke's eloquence only serves to render more visible the darkness of that unhappy labyrinth of unavailing revenge, in which we have entangled ourselves. He presents no clue for extrication. He would have us continue the wasteful war, yet justly ridicules the absurdity of planting guns and cannons against system;—and he calls this a necessary war, that struggles with a pernicious system, which he says must be subdued, or England is annihilated as an empire; while, in another place, he tells us the same system is laid too deep in the corruption of human nature for the hope that it will ever be renounced. Why, then, does he exhort us to persist in setting up

"Our bloody flag against our patience?"

He imputes the impotence of this war, on our part, to the weakness and blunders of our cabinet-councils; yet asserts, that if England is to be saved, it must be by the man who, directing those councils, was the source of all the ineffective plans of whose weakness and blunders he complains. He charges them with absurdity in neglecting to attack France in her centre, where, torn by faction, she was assailable, and combating her on her frontiers, where she was impregnable.

Surely that accusation is an arrant Irishism. How was the centre to be attacked, without combating the frontiers?—unless he could have procured for every soldier Fortunatus' wishing-cap.

General Washington's final counsel to congress, seems to me the purest emanation of serene wisdom and true policy. Without naming any nation, it is plain that he means to hold up, as warnings to his country, the overwhelming madness of France, and the rash folly of the combined attempts to avenge that guilt which, if unstimulated by foreign assailance, would have been self-avenged: also the impolicy of that partial blindness in her cause, which discerns not her guilt.

He also bears animated testimony against the

ruinous consequences which must finally ensue from her outrages upon religion and morality.

In Mr Burke's book, and in this oration, we feel the striking difference between the consistent dictates of calm wisdom, and the eloquent ravings of helpless indignation—raving over mischiefs it is conscious of having fomented. Not but its effusions are sometimes very luminously discriminating; particularly when they trace the inherent difference of the English constitution, made for the individual, and that of the French, where all individual interests are sacrificed to the state. But Mr Burke is too proud to acknowledge the original and fatal error of that interference which he had stimulated; and, in imputing our misfortunes to secondary causes, he plunges into a chaos of contradictions, which his genius and oratory vainly strive to illuminate. Surely we may parody, and apply to the style, and to the exhortations of this extraordinary work, a line of Pope's:

"Great to no purpose—vengeful to no end."

I like, however, the ridicule he throws upon that cant of despondency, which imputes the bad consequences of state impolicy to our individual

vices. The same weak lamentation was plentifully uttered in the eve of the disastrous American war—as if we had not been unsuccessful on account of our attempted tyranny over that country, but on account of our gaming, lasciviousness, and Sabbath-breaking; as if these vices had not been equally prevalent when the arms of England were everywhere triumphant in the preceding war, that closed so brilliantly for us in 1763.

The same cant is now revived. I heard it lately from the lips of one of our church dignitaries, who knits his brows, as at blasphemy, when any one presumes to say that it had been happy for England, if she had remembered that France was not responsible to her for its home-enormities, and, under that consideration, had declined interfering.

But it is with national as with individual pride. —We had rather confess ourselves wicked than weak.

You will perhaps think I am wading beyond my depth, when I thus write to you of politics—and perhaps also you may recollect that I once exulted in our

"Rearing the bloody flag against our patience."

I recollect it too, with some self condemnation

for the rashness of my judgment, that caught the frenzy of the majority of our countrymen;—but I am not too proud to confess myself mistaken, beneath the force of such disastrous proofs of it exhibited by this ruinous war. Time is a broad mirror, which often shows us the fallacy of our own judgment. I remain, &c.

LETTER LVII.

Mrs H. Thornton.

Lichfield, Dec. 11, 1796.

From Mr Wilberforce and others, I learned that you were at dear desolate Westella last summer, and I conceived the inevitable pain of such revisiting. Your pen, in the letter before me, gives to that pre-conception life and mournful colouring. Ah, that vacant chair! How strong a power does affection, combined with the remembrance of former habits, give to inanimate objects, to present the resemblance of those whom we have lost!

You resume your assertion in favour of innate callousness of feeling. I must always dissent

from you on that theme, and believe that such decision, from a mind of strong sensibility, is the result of inattention to a due balance of our happiness and misery. The pleasures of our sensibility are as a full flowing river, that fertilizes and beautifies, not only every mead, tree, shrub, and flower upon its borders, but all the neighbouring woods and fields. Because, when winds roar, and long-continued rains descend, it becomes a mischievous and wasteful inundation, shall we wish to inhabit "a barren and dry land where no water is?" The dreary and whelming flood is of seldom recurrence; but perpetual is the course of the useful and ad-ning stream. To quit the metaphor—look at th' dispassionate man or woman, in the midst of affluence and leisure!—See if the ennui, which accompanies all their pursuits, their employments, their attempted pleasures, be not a much greater misfortune than the occasional sorrows, and yearning regrets of the feeling heart?

I think of Mr Burke's last performance as you do, except that the style delights me,—full of allusion, metaphor, and imagery, given in that sort of point which engraves the matter of the work on our memories. No style pleases me that is not far above the water-mark of Addison's prose,

which we have heard so much extolled, but which appears to me, when it is serious, as no otherwise admirable than as a soporific.

In respect to the reasoning, and to the counsels of this work: In a few parts they please me, as they do you; as an whole, I consider the production as pernicious. With nineteen out of twenty of his readers, Mr B. will succeed in his design to re-stimulate the public mind to continue the war, as he stimulated its commencement. The majority of readers, as you are well aware, never think of analyzing their author's principles, of comparing his various assertions with each other. Mr B.'s arguments tend to prove the contest fruitless, hopeless, desperate; yet he deems it infinitely preferable to any peace which can be made with Jacobins, and counsels its continuance while that system remains, against which, he justly observes, force can do nothing, and which, he says, is laid too deep in the corruption of human nature to hope that reason will ever vanquish it. Eternal war with France is, therefore, the result of his adjurations. With such counsels, he should have pointed out the means by which eternal war is to be maintained in a free state. France has shewn us how it may be maintained in a despotic one. With such counsels to

England, Mr B. ought to have disclosed the grand chymic arcanum—since that alone can render them practicable.

His discrimination of the two constitutions is fine—that of England, studious not only of the general good, but bending on all sides to individual security, comfort, and enjoyment;—that of France, since the revolution there, annihilating individual claims, and demanding, without remorse, the sacrifice of them all to itself.

We meet with characters in society which seem types of each—the polite benevolent man, ever ready to wave his own gratifications in consideration of those of others—and the sordid, selfish, overbearing fellow, who thinks only of himself, wholly regardless of other people's feelings. Adieu! Yours affectionately.

LETTER LVIII.

Miss Arden.

Lichfield, Dec. 17, 1796.

My dear Miss Arden's letter breathes an air of hope, comfort, and even gaiety, that charms me.

Some amendment in her beloved brother's health, was, I know, the sun from whence those rays were imparted.

By Mrs Ibetson's pencil, and your accurate description of the scenes and society by which you are surrounded, and of the apartments you inhabit, I am, in imagination, completely at Greenwich. Assure yourselves, dear friends, that inclination will not be wanting to place me there in reality.

Lichfield news!—you say you thirst for it; and want to know all the new attachments that dawn and ripen in our vicinage. As for your thirst—the well is very dry. It is true, we have softened the austerity of winter, as the sweet Akenside describes:

> "Hence the loud city's busy throngs,
> Urge the warm bowl, and cheerful fire,
> Harmonious dances, festal songs,
> Against the rage of Heaven conspire;"

but I do not find that these gay meetings have collected many combustibles for the Hymeneal torch. On returning home from my summer's excursion, I found the B—— family established in the late Mr Grove's habitation—know not if they mean to settle here totally, but they are, at least, stationary for the winter. They are much liked.

Three fashionable young women, who seem belonging to us, much enliven the public walk and the ball-room. Meeting them chiefly in large companies, I can speak only of exteriors. The eldest, of middle height, is more graceful than handsome; the second, Miss Catherine, tall and well made, except the singular blemish of the left arm being discernibly shorter than the right. Her features are fine, her profile perfectly Grecian, and strongly resembling the lovely Lady Fielding, but less beautiful, from great inferiority of complexion, and from the absence of that bloom that kindles on Lady Fielding's cheek, like an orient morning of May. Miss Harriet B., the youngest of the three graces, is called extremely handsome. Her dark-blue eyes, of the Sir Peter Lely shape, with the finest possible chesnut eye-lashes and eye-brows, are uncommonly lovely; then is she snowy fair—but also snowy pale, and with a countenance which strikes me as snowy cold. We look in vain for those sweet know-not-whats about the mouth, which, if they could be found, as they are found about the lips of Mrs E. Sneyd, would give resistless fascination to the most charming eyes in the world,—but there they are not, in mercy to the hearts of mankind. She has an hereditary claim to conciliatory smiles. They rea-

der her father charming at sixty-five. Mrs Burton is out of health, but sprightly and agreeable.

Graceful Bob Lovelace, as you call Sir R. W——, has not appeared at any of our balls, nor anywhere else in the neighbourhood, that I hear of. You rally me for praising him, and ask how many franks he has given me. A couple, which he gave me at Buxton, can hardly be supposed to have bribed my partiality. No, his charities!—his noble behaviour to Mr Erskine at Buxton, and the high terms in which the good and devout Mrs Price, who has known him from a child, speaks of him;—these things induced me to believe that he is not a libertine upon principle, though he paid so dear for having been drawn, in early youth, into the snares of a wanton beauty, who violated with him her nuptial vow. Ask your darling, your truly excellent brother, if that frailty is incompatible with goodness of heart in the male sex—where the man is the seduced, not the seducer?

You ask if I have seen Spencer's Leonora, with engravings by Lady D. Beauclerk? Lord Bagot sent me that charming work, so beyond all comparison superior to all the other translations. I have not read aloud less than fifty times this violent story, adorned by the pencil of kindred genius. I took

it with me to Buxton; and, mentioning it to Mrs Powys of Berwick, she engaged me to read it to a party at her house, Lady Scarborough, Colonel Lumley and his sisters, Lady Louisa, and Lady Sophia. Then Lady Lawley desired I would bring it to her rooms, where I was to drink tea next day. There I found Lady Harewood, her intelligent friend Mrs Wood of York, and engaging Miss Garth of the Carleton household, with Lady and Miss Lawley.

These parties talked much of this poem, and partially represented its reader's powers as Siddonian. Then one party after another petitioned to hear it, till there was scarce a morning in which a knot of eight or ten did not flock to my apartments, to be poetically frightened: Mr Erskine, Mr Wilberforce—every thing that was every thing, and every thing that was nothing, flocked to Leonora; and here, since my return, the fame of this business having travelled from Buxton hither, the same curiosity has prevailed. Its terrible graces grapple minds and tastes of every complexion. Creatures that love not verses for their beauty, like these verses for their horrors. That universal passion for the horrible, must proceed from the mind adverting to its own situation of comparative security, ease, and happiness, and

feeling the sense of comfort strongly resulting from the contrast.

Charming Lady Donegall, and her engaging daughter-in-law, Lady Harriot Chichester, Lord Spencer, and Miss Godfrey, were desirous of hearing me read Leonora, and of seeing me exhibit the equestrian ghost, though, from their intimacy with Mr Spencer, they were familiar with it, as mentioned by him. That party, and also the Swinfen family, met me and the ghost at Freeford. Nothing can exceed the blended dignity and sweetness of the Marchioness. It rejoiced me also to see a son of the first Lady Donegall, whom I loved and respected, so amiable, pleasing, and elegant. It is to be regretted that he was not the first-born of that house: he would do credit to rank and fortune so princely.

The Orpheus of the English orchestra, Cramer, descended amongst us last week. On a visit to Lord Curzon, he loitered a few days in our little city, allured by the society of his friend Saville. Four of those evenings were devoted to music at Mr Parker's, Mr S. Simpson's, and twice at my house. We sat down twenty to supper each night, and the parties were at once harmonic and convivial. Nothing could exceed Mr Cramer's amiable desire to please and oblige. He not only

played overtures, solos, and quartettos, in the divinest manner, in concert, before supper; but after supper, convulsed us all with laughing at the humorous ingenuity of his violin. He contrived to represent upon it a convent of old nuns, singing hymns at midnight, with their cracked voices, and shivering with cold. Then he set the young folks to dancing, and played country dances to them an whole hour! Thus did he give them to boast through life of having danced to Cramer's violin. That humane soul went to Birmingham, through the bitter severity of last Monday's weather, to play gratis, as Mr Saville sung gratis, for a brother-musician's concert, who has a large family. I went thither also, by invitation, with Mrs Ironmonger to Mr E. Simpson's; but repented the temerity of such an excursion, taken beneath the mal-influence of a violent cold. I was extremely ill all the while I was at Birmingham, and obliged to leave the divine concert before it was half over:

> ——— "For to the fever'd frame,
> The warbling strains of softest melody
> Seem but discordant harshness."

I could hardly attend to Cramer's solo, or Saville's enchanting song. I have written till my fingers

are tired, and the drowsy hour steals fast upon my pen. Long may it lead you, and your darling brother, to pillows of health and peace!

This is the age of miracles. A great one has lately arisen in the poetical world—the most extraordinary that ever appeared, as to juvenile powers, except that of the ill-starred Chatterton:—Southey's Joan of Arc, an epic poem of strength and beauty, by a youth of twenty. Verse is so little the taste, while it is so luxuriantly the produce of these times, that probably its reputation, nay, even its very name, may not have reached you. Me they had not reached till mentioned to me by Lady E. Butler in a letter, which a little time preceeded the book itself, a present from her ladyship and Miss Ponsonby. Truly did they divine that its genius would attract my imagination, while its design must excite my abhorrence.

The work seeks to brand, with deepest stains of injustice and cruelty, the memory of our gallant Henry V. and turn to deadliest aconite the laurels of Agincourt! It defames the English character in general, stigmatizes our constitution, and deifies the Moloch spirit of that of France.

When you come to read this work, you will mourn, with me, the Catiline spirit it breathes. Adieu!

LETTER LIX.

MRS SNEYD.

Lichfield, Dec. 27, 1796.

I AM much obliged by the kind present from Belmont. These sylvan dainties rarely find their way to my table; when they do, I am very proud of them. These plumy beauties will be more welcome, from fancying myself indebted for them as much to Mr Sneyd's skill as to his bounty;

> "When, on the surges of the boundless air,
> Triumphant borne, his justly-levell'd tube
> With lightning speed, beneath his steady eye,
> In thunder sends the livid shower of fate
> To o'ertake their sounding pinions."

I had hoped your letter would have given me a nearer prospect of seeing you both, and I am sorry to find you think Miss Sneyd's health so imperfect. It was in some degree thus, I remember well, with her father in his youth. Yes, your winter rose was a vernal lily.

If Akenside's poems are in Mr Sneyd's library, look for the Ode to the Winter Solstice. It is

one of the most perfectly Horatian odes in our language, and very interesting. I always delight to read it at this season, particularly if, as now, it is a rigid and dreary one. The ode opens with a fine description of the sun in his chariot, attaining his wintry goal, as to Europe, though he flames on Potosi in ardour intolerable. A winter landscape then rises in the stanzas. Next the poet beautifully adverts to the social pleasures, which soften the atmospheric horrors—then contrasts those pleasures with the terrors excited in the village wife.

> "Meantime, perhaps, with tender fears,
> The village dame the curfew hears,
> While round her hearth the children play.
> At morn their father went abroad,
> The moon is sunk and deep the road!
> She sighs and wonders at his stay."

To these pictures succeed some sublime philosophic and religious reflections, and the ode concludes with a gay prospect of spring,—an enamoured invocation to May, which the presence of his Eudora is to gild.

Mr Sneyd's recommendation must make me wish to read any book which obtains it. Of the Monk, I have been long in pursuit through the mazes of hireling circulation. Henry White, my

literary huntsman, has been foiled in the track. Every mention I have heard made of that novel has excited my curiosity.

Those volumes have been to me like lightning, —playing before my hopes and then vanishing— and in more senses than one, since I apprehend the lights are mischievous as bright that gleam from its pages. Me, however, they will not harm; the hails and rains, and snows of time, have rendered my frame a non-conductor to all such electricity. Adieu.

LETTER LX.

Miss Ponsonby.

Lichfield, Dec. 29. 1796.

Though I have anxiously longed for renewed intercourse with the ornaments of Langollen Vale, and began to fear that the length of its suspension might be the result of impaired health, or new inquietude, yet were their last letters too sweetly affectionate, their reception, since I last wrote, of my friends, Mr Saville and his daugh-

ter, too liberally condescending and kind, for any suspicion of faded amity to wound my heart. Deeply, I confess, would such a suspicion wound, and punish the thankless guilt of its adoption. Those other not unworthy fears, the offspring of silence, vanish, now the sun of communication shines out, gilds the closing year, and will illuminate the dawn of its successor.

Conscious that my remonstrance against the increase of my full measure of obligation would prove unavailing, I imputed the delayed arrival of Joan of Arc to its true cause, and, therefore, had she previously presented herself to me, I should have closed my eyes against her poetic powers—and they are very far indeed beyond my expectation, from the youth of the author, and the disgusting arrogance of his well-written preface. Those poetic powers are now rising upon me in all the glow of novelty. I had seen no review of this work. Scarce ever do I look at the silly remarks of the hireling critics upon poetry. My progress through Joan of Arc is very slow, and slow I always make it over a composition of real genius. Deplorably scanty as is my leisure for reading, I cannot gallop through such writing as this. I read repeatedly every passage that struck me with beauty, or with defect, and with pen

and paper before me, to record their impressions. Thus I have, as yet, only attained the close of the second book.

While I admire the splendours of imagination, which flash upon me in this poem, I must consider them as the baleful beauties of the lightning. O Southey! is this a period in which to exalt the French character, and, with parricide impulse, to depreciate that of England?

Dost thou presume to prophecy, that what thou unfeelingly callest "the stormy morning, shall have a cloudless noon"—never, never!—dark and sunless are the principles by which it rose—by which it is supported.

As a poem, Joan of Arc has high merit. Though defect is frequent on its pages, yet, at the conclusion of the second book, I have risen from it with a disposition to believe that we have had nothing of such manly greatness, except from Chatterton, at an age so early as that of its author.

The style of the first book seems to waver in its choice of a model between Milton and Cowper. In the greatly superior second, it becomes wholly Miltonic. The ardour of imitation is very apt to mislead the judgment. It has produced that consequence in this epic; because Milton, in the Paradise Lost, has often harsh

versification, to make the sound echo the sense, Southey perpetually and wantonly offends the ear, by inharmonious and stiff lines, which answer no imitative purpose. But the ideas are frequently of unborrowed greatness and beauty, though sometimes obscure and confused. The preternatural agency has immense sublimity, though the episode of night, and the dream, engendered by fierce hate and gloomy hope, is to me of "unimaginable" import. That episode, notwithstanding the fine lines at the beginning, disturbs the wildly magnificent machinery of the ice-built island, its meteor-lighted palace, and the allegoric demons, its terrible inhabitants.

The obscure episode I mentioned, imitates Milton's, of Sin and Death; but there the allegory is obvious as it is sublime. In this same fine second book of Southey's, the start of ambition, and his smile of savage joy, though not equal to the ghastly smile of Milton's Death, are yet striking pictures.

An extremely fine idea is the apparition of Joan, which is placed before her mortal eyes. Though certainly suggested by the vision shewn to Adam by the angel from the mountain, in the eleventh book of Paradise Lost, Cain murdering Abel, yet I think our young bard, in that circumstance, transcends his original. Joan's appari-

tion seems shewn to her for more important purpose, viz. that the false hope of reward might have no share in stimulating her exertions. The consciousness of final martyrdom, given by this vision, extremely exalts her character.

The strain of death-foreboding music, which ensues, is beautifully introduced and described; and the epithet *calmy* for midnight, is lovely. If the author had heard your or my Eolian harp, breathing their sweet, their solemn, and various harmonies, he would have introduced it here, as a simile.

The impersonization of doubtful and insecure peace, alluding to that eighteen months truce which our admired Henry gave to France after the battle of Agincourt, is amongst the most exquisite instances of poetic imagery; but ah! on recurring to the preface, I find, that the martyr-dooming apparition, the death-boding music, and the sweet convalescent, representing insecure peace, are Mr Colridge's. In the progress of the poem, we shall see if the author equals the excellence of the poetic present that was made him. I do not think any thing quite so admirable preceded these pictures; but then, again, this acknowledged tribute of friendship exonerates the author from the disturbing episode, as to its composition at least.

'The siege of Rouen is pathetically described; but if the author was capable of feeling real pity for such distresses, and honest, virtuous, impartial indignation towards those who inflict them, would he not have execrated that hellish revolution, which, to exalt and applaud, is the chief design for which this poem was written?—during which thousands and tens of thousands fraternized tyrants, have inflicted miseries more remorseless than those which, on his pages, he meant should stain the memory of our fifth Henry. The lamentable wretchedness his not unjust claims on France caused, are practised by all who besiege a city that will not capitulate, and whose provisions the army before it have power to intercept; but Liberty, how much greater have been her evils, with her multiplied bastiles, where loathsome filth was added to the immuring misery of the single Bastile existing under the old government—crowded with old age, pregnant women, and infants, besides the throngs who, in the prime and strength of life, were thus bastiled and destroyed for being known to have wealth, and for being suspected to wish the return of law and justice to their wretched country, and of protection by subordinate sway! Oh! if genuine Liberty had produced the revolution, she would have disdained force, and abhorred cruelty; neither confiscation, nor imprisonment, nor death, would

have marked her progress. She would have left every one free to choose between regal government and a republic, and left the decision to the majority. But this *false Duessa!*—those who give to her the name of Liberty, after having known her tree by its fruits—alas! that rising genius, splendid as this author's, should thus disgrace itself!

Adieu, dearest Madam!—I am sure yourself and Lady Eleanor will lament with me these indelible stains on poetic laurels of such early vigour, and luxuriant growth!

LETTER LXI.

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER.

Lichfield, Jan. 23, 1797.

SUFFER me to congratulate your Ladyship, and Miss Ponsonby, on the dispersion of the hostile fleet, whose invading design is, for the present—would to God it might be for ever—baffled by the elements. The morning after I dispatched my last to Llangollen Vale, and just as I had entered our cathedral, I was told that the French

had landed twenty thousand men in Ireland. Heart-sick and agitated, while my lips uttered the prayer of the liturgy, my heart offered up one insuppressive ejaculation, that these kingdoms may be preserved from this worse than Gothic inundation, which is desolating Europe. Then my hurried thoughts imaged the consternation with which such tidings would banish tranquillity from your bowers.

All the succeeding intelligence has tended to quiet our alarms, and most of the inhabitants of our ministerially confident city triumph, in a degree of security, on this momentous subject, which I cannot partake, however comparatively tranquillized. The attempt evinces the determined designs of the French. If they once effect a landing in Ireland, Scotland, or England, I fear they will find a powerful party of impious fools to join them. Our populace groan under the already dreadfully oppressive weight of the taxes. Misery is very credulous, and desperation rushes on change. They will believe the lying foes of this constitution, whether English or French, who shall promise them the delusive comforts attached to their stalking-horse words, Liberty and Equality, *alias* Plunder and Murder.

It has long been more than time for our rulers to make home-defence and national frugality their

first considerations—O! while they are struggling and subsidizing away the lives and property of the nation, to balance the power of Europe, the dreadful increase of the national debt occasions such depredation upon the comfort, the scanty means of life in the lower classes, as is already borne with perilous murmuring. It is in vain to plead that the minister taxes luxuries, since the weight, even of those taxes, eventually falls on the populace. The times are dangerous, the symptoms ominous; but power, and its unseeing, unhearing worshippers, will not read the hand-writing on the wall. It told them, in broad letters, that this was a period most unfit for the mockery of a negotiation, with which ministers have insulted the nation's wishes for peace.

My inmost soul detests the bloody French, and abjures all confidence in the humanity or worth of those who vindicate and admire them. I wish ardently to think well of our rulers, but I cannot blindly idolize them, or their plans. I do not believe that the French, on fire with the idea of the rich plunder of these kingdoms, would have accepted reasonable terms of accommodation. Much, however, did it behove our Court to shew itself in earnest, by offering such terms as the French ought to have accepted—such as the disa . cted here could not rationally have censured;—but,

alas! an headlong infatuation prevails, and makes me fear there is a judgment overhangs our love of war. God preserve your native land, and this, to which you are now naturalized, from ever becoming the seat of that fiend.

Now to the subject, on which you request my sentiments at full—this Joan of Arc. Its poetic beauties are so numberless, so intrinsic, that its poetic defects, however conspicuous, are as dust in the balance. Its author is a born poet, and of the very highest class—an extensive knowledge of history and science, and of all his English predecessors and contemporaries in poetic composition, support, illustrate, and adorn the creative powers of his fancy; yet, at present his taste equals not his genius, since every page presents us with lines which will not, by any art of recitation, read as verse, though they scan as such. Imitations of Milton's least agreeable phraseology are of sickening redundance in this work. His "nor did not," used as an affirmative at seldom times by Milton, is frequent here; his vulgar-sounding word, beleaguered, once used in the Paradise Lost, offends us continually in this new epic. Then there is an affected neglect of those useful commas which so much elucidate an author's meaning. They are seldom used by Southey, even to mark the parenthetic sense.

The horrors of the ninth book of Joan of Arc impress the shuddering fancy with a force that evinces the masterly powers of the author. Like Milton, he is often indebted to his reading and his memory. He had the striking reasoning of the person, Despair, in favour of suicide, from St Preux's letter to Julia, in Rousseau's finest work, and from Julia's answer, the reply of Joan. The fortieth line of that ninth book is from Collins's Ode to Evening. In the speech of the beatified Theodore, we recognize that of Euphrosyne in the first edition of Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination:

> "Lo I am here, to answer to your vows,
> And be the meeting fortunate!" &c.

Akenside, as time philosophised away the bolder spirit of poesy, expunged that beautiful allegoric episode, the gem of his work, from the later editions. Southey's imitation of the "Lo! I am here," does not equal its original in beauty.

His description of the lake, on which Joan, in her vision, embarks, is wonderfully fine; but it appears to me to have been suggested, as indeed the whole plan of this ninth book, by Hayley's description of Serena's voyage, in the third and fifth cantos of the Triumphs of Temper. The solemnity and higher elevations of Southey's sub-

ject, gives, however, more dignity to the imitation than we find in the exquisitely ingenious original. There is inaccuracy in the description of Joan's more terrible voyage. We are told her boat was impelled along by powers unseen,—and immediately a female pilot is rendered visible; and who that dreadful allegoric phantom is, I am at a loss to ascertain.

Despair, so finely painted by Spenser, and others, is nowhere more sublimely imaged, both as to form, and habitation, than in this ninth book of Joan. The lines from 185 to the end of the passage are greatly written. Alas! how faithful to nature and experience is the sad scene they pourtray!

The female corpse, festering in putrefaction, and the corpse of Theodore, are new features in this poetic house of death, and grandly increase its horrors. The purgatory, where the guilty are punished by a glut of those objects, which, in life, they had pursued to a criminal excess, while it strongly resembles, improves on Mr Hayley's 5th book of the Triumphs of Temper. The hall of glory, and its fire-crowned monarchs, is from the hall of Eblis, the palace of fire, in that wild wonder of genius, the Caliph Vathec, so wittily ludicrous in its opening and progress, so sublime in its close.

The author of Joan is an arch-chymist as to sublimity; he not only creates it at will, but he extracts it from all he has read. Is there not, however, in this sublime book, some injudicious mixture of Pagan mythology in the hall of the Fates? and is not a well-wigged physician too ludicrous a picture for the general solemnity of the design?

The other books are so thick sown with grand and beautiful passages, that many of these folio sheets would not suffice me to point them out;—yet I cannot omit the midnight search of the heroine for her slain lover on the field of battle—it drowned me in tears,—and, though probably taken from Mr Hayley's fine translation of a part of the Araucana in his Essays on Epic Poetry, yet I think it excels its prototype.

The figure of Joan, at the funeral of Theodore, is great painting; and the circumstance of her being awakened from the rapt contemplation of her own tortured death, by the rattle of the earth thrown on the coffin of her lover, strikes full upon the heart of the reader.

Conrade's character is finely sustained; his short and stern appearances, at the royal banquets, are very striking and noble.

This author, of miraculous juvenility, is happy in his exordiums. Seven out of the ten books

open beautifully.—Alas! that the heart should be so dark, where the imagination is so luminous!

How lamentable it is, that rising genius, effulgent as this author's, should thus disgrace itself on the score of patriotism and principle! We may apply his own exclamation on the conduct of Henry, where it is infinitely more deserved,

> ——— "The old and the infirm,
> The mother and her babes!—and yet no lightning
> Blasted this fell republic."

The dread of the pestilential blast, the Simoom, which the traveller sees approaching, as he crosses the sandy deserts of Africa, is admirably described, and finely applied to the terror felt by the English at the approach of the Amazonian heroine, resistless in battle.

Dr Darwin's impersonization of that death-breathing gale, in the Botanic Garden, is highly poetic, thus:

> "Fierce on blue steams he rides the tainted air,
> Points his keen eye, and waves his whistling hair;
> While, as he turns, the undulating soil
> Rolls its red waves, and billowy deserts boil;"

yet, I confess, the simpler grandeur of Southey's picture pleases me more:

——"Such ominous fear
Seizes the traveller o'er the trackless sands,
Who marks the dread Simoom across the waste,
Sweep its swift pestilence.—To earth he falls,
Nor dares give utterance to the inward prayer,
Deeming the Genius of the desert breathes
The purple blast of Death!"

When circumstances are in themselves sublime, and all things horrid are sublime in poetry, it argues a taste of meretricious luxuriance, rather than of chaste and dignified judgment, to call in the aids of fancy and fable. The silent prostration of the traveller, to avoid inhaling the blast of death, leaves more terrific impression upon the mind than the image of an approaching fiend. Had we not known the reverse to be the truth, we should impute the Darwinian description to the boy of genius, and that in Joan of Arc to the poet of riper years, at least according to Beattie's distinction in his Minstrel:

"At first, with cumbersome, superfluous show,
Edwin was wont his flow'ry rhymes to lace
With ardour to adorn;—but Nature now,
To his experienc'd eye, a modest grace
Presents, where ornament the second place
Holds; to intrinsic worth and just design
Subservient still—simplicity apace
Tempers his rage—he feels her power divine,
And clears th' ambiguous phrase, and lops the loaded line."

I remain, &c. &c.

LETTER LXII.

MRS GELL.

Lichfield, Feb. 13, 1797.

THE date of your letter reproaches an involuntary crime.—If it had not been involuntary, I should reproach myself.

You are very good to express pleasure in the report Mr Bower gave you of my healthy appearance at Chesterfield in the autumn; but fulness of figure and floridness, are often the coarse flattery of nature respecting constitution. By rheumatic pain and weakness in my limbs, I was then annoyed, and they have been my enfeebling oppressors through the winter.

Mrs Smith, and her father, lately accompanied me on an eight days visit to our mutual friend, Mr Rawson of Nottingham. Amid its social and harmonic pleasures, sighs of deprivation often arose, from the melancholy consciousness that my eyes must search in vain for those inhabitants of that town, who used to lead me into its circles, and who were at once my relations and my friends. We returned home last week.

Your landscape of Twickenham gardens, beautiful in its *clare obscure* traits, paints itself so distinctly on my imagination, that I seem to wander with you through the consecrated scene. Heaven knows whether I shall ever be able to realize a vision so gratifying. You are very obliging in wishing me to do so, as your guest. It will, in April, be eleven years since I was in town. Though, in the year 1790, the loss of my beloved father gave me that local freedom I had long so gladly wanted, I have never, since my unwelcome emancipation, thought myself sufficiently in health to encounter those unavoidable hurries, to which extended and complicated connections expose me when in London;—and now, alas! is it not dreadfully probable, that all the pleasures of social intercourse may sink in the darkness of national danger? I have a dire presentiment, that this island will soon become the seat of war. Those human fiends, bloody and desperate, who are cancelling and tearing to pieces all the sacred bonds of civil society, seem irresistible. What had become of our boasted "water-walled bulwarks," if the winds had slept as soundly as our Admiral?

Through the last three years, I have been here a Cassandra, whose derided prophecies are lamentably accomplished. It is my daily prayer, that

the better omens of my fearless friends may have finally to boast a more discerning spirit. Fervently do I wish that your domestic regrets over the past, and my national fears for the future, may disperse in a rising train of brighter ideas, "like fen-born fogs before the ascending sun."

I had the pleasure of your second son's company at breakfast, with Professor Harwood, on their late short residence at Lichfield, and to perceive many little "know not whats" of countenance and manner, that reminded me of you. Whether or not the resemblance was more than skin-deep, I had no time to decide.

Your unfortunate emigrant friend must be a man of genius. His compliment to Hopton is beautifully expressed in that epigram you sent me. Ah! how inseparable is the epithet unfortunate to the name of Frenchman, whether in the class of the oppressed or oppressors!

You will pity me when I tell you that my promised enjoyment in the new effusions of Mrs Darblay's fancy is not yet realized. A combination of circumstances have produced this delay. It seems the fashion to decry it, as immeasurably inferior to the elder sisters of her charming pen. But your very different opinion is an host in its favour, while the palm of preference Dr Burney extends to Camilla, excites expectations, which

look down upon the verdict of the multitude, notwithstanding his partiality to the faulty, though great Dr Johnson;—and of his idea so opposite to Johnson's, that Richardson can be equalled by even the most accomplished novelist of this or any future period. Richardson was the Shakespeare of that order of moral fiction.—We look not on his like again.

Sir Brooke Boothby's publication is classically accurate. Some of the sonnets are very pathetic, very sweet. Of their numeric construction, though it is legitimate, I am not enamoured, from the constantly recurring pause of the sense at the end of every fourth line. Sameness and insipidity of sound result to my ear, from the want of those impressive breaks in different parts of the lines, which gracefully diversify the pause, and give spirit and variety to sonnets, written on the Miltonic model.

Yes, I have read Hurdis' Tears of Affection; but neither from that, nor from any other composition of his, did I ever receive pleasure. He has a strange coarse imagination, perpetually presenting disgusting ideas. Do you remember his filthy description of Dol the Dairy maid's teeth in the Village Curate, with his yet more filthy preference of such impure masticators to the clean ivory supplied by the dentist? I suspect, from his Tears

of Affection, that he has as little sensibility as cleanliness. The man could not feel real anguish, who suffered his ideas to dwell upon the form of a sister he pretends to have loved so passionately, when that form was ghastly in festering dissolution—still less, since he has endured to describe such an object with his pen. You remember the covering which Clara throws over her lifeless and changing Eloisa, and the heart-piercing anathema she utters at that moment: "Accursed be he who shall lift this veil!—who shall presume to look upon this altered face!"

The picture Mr H. presents of his Isabel, violates the sanctuary of the tomb. It is thus that the unfeeling, when they affect pathos, overstep the modesty of nature, and for the sweet and delicate touches of her sorrows, present us with the bombast of indecent horror.

Have you seen the Joan of Arc?—that twin miracle in juvenile poetic excellence to the inspirations of Chatterton:—but this later prodigy is in design a parricide, aiming envenomed shafts at the bosom of his country, her constitution, and the character of her inhabitants! Adieu!

LETTER LXIII.

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER.

Lichfield, Feb. 19, 1797.

WELCOME as dear Lady Eleanor's letters always are, I am not so selfish to desire she should honour me with scriptures so precious, when other of those numerous claims, which press upon her time, render the indulgence inconvenient to herself.

Mr Roberts of Dinbren is now here, and I hope to prepare my packet to travel back to Langollen by him. His account of the health and cheerfulness of my charming friends, apparent in an interview with which they recently honoured him, charmed me. I was, however, concerned to hear him say you had lately been distressed by the illness, and alarmed for the life of your good Euryclea. That she is recovering I rejoice. The loss of a domestic, faithful and affectionate as Orlando's Adam, must have cast more than a transient gloom over the Cambrian Arden. The Rosalind and Celia of real life give Langollen valley a right to that title.

I returned some ten days ago from an excur-

sion to Nottingham, with Mr S. and his daughter, to the house of a mutual friend. Entering my blue region, after a nine days absence, I found your Ladyship's obliging letter on my table.

Many were the social pleasures of that visit, and sweet the harmonies which request called forth from the musically-endowed lips of my Lichfield associates. Poetic readings also formed part of our amusements. Mr Saville, who reads finely, as you well know, gave us the extracts, with which the Scotish ladies of your neighbourhood favoured him, from that sublime paraphrase of Burger's Leonora, the yet unpublished work of their friend. It is not near so close as the four rival translations, which I have seen, of that wild and violent poem; amongst which four, Mr Spencer's, with its happy engravings, is so very pre-eminent in poetic merit.

Many ideas and images are in the extracts Mr Saville had obtained, which cannot be found in Burger's poem; but they vie, and in some places transcend those of the original in well-imagined horror. Chilling, grand, and horrific is the shrouded corse, rising from the bier, and the half-perished body of the murderer, swinging and creaking in the winds and rain, descending from the gibbet, at the call of the equestrian spectre, and joining the ghastly train on that impetuous journey.

I read Mr Spencer's translation, exhibiting those sublime plates. That version was new to the party who listened to us. In another circle, I went through the principal scenes in Macbeth, by request. I will not tell you how much I was flattered on that arduous attempt, nor with how great a name my powers of reciting were brought into competition.

Thus passed our evenings; but I sighed frequently to miss my relations and friends of that town, whose place may be nowhere found—whose countenances and voices, till then the actual and constant associates of my residences at Nottingham, were mournfully combined in my imagination, with the streets, the houses, the people I saw. Inseparable, as I am sure you have observed, is the affinity between local and human objects, till long habits of seeing separately what we had been used to see united, dissolve, in a great degree at least, the magic chains by which, on their first actual disunion, they seem still ideally linked. Never, perhaps, can that disunion become complete. Congenial impressions will return, though fainter and less continued. The resemblance comes back upon the local object at intervals, like the shadows of trees and hedges upon the field, when a burst of sunshine pervades the clouds, which had for

a period rendered them invisible. Time, and the new custom of seeing the inanimate objects without their former vital accompaniments, are the clouds,—affectionate recollection the gleaming sun, that acts like that which restores the leafy landscape; and, as it strengthens with the increasing power of the solar rays, so strengthens, as meditation grows intense, the image of days and of forms that are fled.

I am crippled with the rheumatism at present, in consequence of a violent cold, taken at our last ball, where the dancers threw open the windows. Thus am I disabled from walking, as is my custom, half an hour, morning and afternoon, in the apartments of this large old mansion,

> "When the chill blustering wind and driving rain
> Prevent my willing feet"

in their out-door wandering. I fear the losing all power of pedestrian exercise. Riding has ever been too dangerous since I fractured my knee at three-and-twenty. Post-chaise-airings are to me no exercise, and insufferably stupid, since I cannot read in a chaise; and my health, I am sure, would sink in total inaction—but away with this querulous strain! My bosom-pains continue their comfortable remission, and I ought to be con-

tented, especially since I have the satisfaction of seeing Mr Saville's more valuable life less oppressed by nervous debility this winter than during the softer sway of the last. Of the indulgent, the thrice-gratifying words, "our friend," in your Ladyship's last letter, he feels the high honour, and, what is more than honour, the sterling value. Superiority of rank may confer the first; from virtue and from talents results the last;—and from whose virtue, whose talents, can they more intensely proceed!

LETTER LXIV.

Mrs Adey of Norfolk.

Lichfield, March 21, 1797.

Your letter, written beneath the final glances of the departing year, reproaches my silence. It could not have existed through the recurrence of unpledged hours, on which no necessary employment presses, and in some of which you desire me to write to you. Ah! were I never to write to you but in periods of such ambiguous indolence, my silence would be eternal; they come to me

no more than to your husband. Every moment of my scanty leisure is plighted ere I leave the morning pillow, and seldom is the day found responsible for such its allotments; even when bodily disorder does not totally bankrupt them.

I met a personage on my last summer's ramble, who introduced herself to me as your acquaintance, Miss L——. She did not tell me you were fond of her. If she had, I should have known what sort of credit was due to her veracity. What a complete dose of manna and salts! —always pompous and fulsome in her flatteries, when she means to be civil, while she is often splenetic without a shadow of provocation. In those irascible moods, the air of sarcasm, which accompanies her unpoliteness, as if she looked down upon us from higher ground of intellect, used to provoke me, first at her, and then at myself, for feeling as if I was wounded by such porcupine quills. She has no native good sense, or she could not be so constantly absurd. She seems to have read nothing but a few plays and popular ballads, from which her quotations are eternal;—but no, I cry her mercy,—Dr Johnson's Ramblers must be added to the narrow list. She affects to admire them. His name is for ever in her mouth. She would have it believed that he had been her intimate friend, and is rude to every-

body who questions his claim to be considered as the very first genius Britain has produced, and as the brightest example of moral excellence. She is not content with its being granted that his talents and learning were eminent, that his spirit was devout, and his bounty towards the indigent extended to the utmost of his power; but he must be allowed a Colossus, bestriding what she supposes the narrow world of intellect and virtue. She is not, however, singular in that blind idolatry of a very mixed and imperfect character. It is common to all naturally weak people, superficial in literature, and undiscerning in the texture of the human mind. We must allow the class is a large one. On all other subjects, the expressions and manners of this self-satisfied female are perfectly unique. Amorous and vain, and recently wealthy, she will probably be the speedy prey of some fortune-hunter. She talks perpetually of her admirers,—the admirers of a plain, coarse woman of fifty, who, as Johnson said of his idolater, the late Mrs Cobb of Lichfield, "knows nothing, has read nothing; and where nothing is put into the brain, nothing can come out of it to any purpose of rational entertainment." To the talents of Mrs Cobb, however, Johnson was not just, since, though it was true that she was illiterate, it was not true that she wanted powers to

entertain; for her understanding was strong, her perceptions quick, her wit shrewd, comic, sarcastic, and original. But your pompous acquaintance has no powers of mind, either natural or acquired. Conversing with her, we feel as if we had mounted a gazebo erected in a desert.

You will be rejoiced to hear, if you do not already know, that considerable wealth flows diffused into the Arden family, by the death of their relation, Mr Cotton of Manchester, a merchant who dealt largely and fortunately, and who has left it to the law to make his will. It is not yet known what is the amount of the separate shares of the divided personal property. I am eagerly solicitous to know, for my dear Miss Arden's sake, and that of her gallant and suffering brother*, so cruelly, so unjustly overlooked in the bequeathed riches of Mrs Newton.—Mr Simpson thinks it will be to them about L.1500 each: a comfortable addition to their little fortune, though it may not give them that entire affluence which their virtues merit, their talents would adorn, and their liberal spirit judiciously diffuse.

* Captain Arden, of the navy, lost his right arm in a brave and victorious action at sea, in the course of the American war.—*S.*

I am not wholly incredulous concerning the imputed egotism, which you mention, in Mr ——'s conversation. It is the natural impolicy of flattered genius, where there is native frankness and good humour. Egotism is never the error of surly pride, and it is early in life corrected in strong minds, however gay and ingenuous the native temperament, unless wealth and eclat of situation disarm that sarcastic lassitude, with which even the egotism of genius is listened to, unsupported by fortune, and by fame. But that air of interest with which people attend to all that is spoken by a man of illustrious and prosperous talents, betrays him into the trust, that, while he indulges in the luxury of pleasing retrospections, the disclosure of his life's events, and of the sentiments they inspired, will meet animated welcome from his hearers. Where the retrospective prospect is so sunny, it is natural to point out to others the illumined spots. Sincerely acceptable to me were such disclosures; nor did my imagination once suggest that I should ever grow weary of ingenuous eloquence, gratifying my not politely assumed, but real desire to investigate the destiny, the impressions, and the opinions of so celebrated a character. There was no time for satiety on such themes during a fortnight's shared, though daily intercourse. Besides, our

conversations as frequently turned on the English classics, and on politics, as on his feelings and fortunes.

Apropos of politics, in their present desperate situation, which puts them into the mouth of very babes and sucklings in state affairs. You do me but justice in acquitting my mind of the least bias towards republicanism; but Mr Pitt has lost my long-existing confidence in his wisdom and integrity. It has vanished beneath the mad extravagance with which he has lavished the public money, seduced the Bank into clandestine and ruinous traffic with the court, and outraged the constitution by loans to the Emperor, made in treacherous privacy, without the consent of parliament: loans, which can only defer, not prevent the inevitable hour of the Emperor's separate peace with our enemies. How evidently to all common sense, better to England to have met the assaults of France, when they shall be turned solely against her, before her public credit had received the late fatal blight, than thus to go on purchasing present exemption (if, indeed, lavished millions can purchase it), till state-bankruptcy, and the consequently ruined fortunes of three parts of the nation shall palsy our nerves of self-defence, exasperate us with government, and render us desperately careless who may be our masters, or

what becomes of a constitution, violated out of all its power to protect property. O! hapless England! how rapidly art thou falling from thy late high prosperity, the victim of thy credulous confidence in one proud man, whom no chastizing experience could warn from his tricking expedients, so fraught with danger to his country; and by which he buys

" Short intermission, fraught with double woe!"

LETTER LXV.

Mrs Stokes.

Lichfield, March 25, 1797.

Ah! dear Mrs Stokes, you will be very sorry to hear that we have lost excellent Mrs Mary Newton, by a most afflicting mistake of the druggist, in sending extract of opium for pills, instead of extract of bark. These pills her brother had made up for himself several days before. A slight indisposition induced him to persuade her to take some of them. A gouty seizure had prevented his design of taking them, or he had been

the victim. She took four, which included fifteen grains of opium. In a few hours after swallowing them, violent pain in her stomach, and sickness came on, with dizziness and torpor. She lay down on the bed, and soon passed into a state of insensibility, and died in twenty hours from the time of taking the fatal pills. The apothecary, Mr Salt, was sent for, on her sleep lasting an alarming time. He asked what she had taken; and, on examining the pills, the shocking circumstance became evident.

Mr Newton is overwhelmed with anguish in his consciousness of having been the unfortunate, though guiltless curtailer of his beloved sister's life, the first and dearest comfort of his own existence. He sent immediately for Dr Darwin, who confirmed Mr Salt's decision, that she died by taking a quantity of opium, which would have destroyed two or three people unaccustomed to that drug.

I hope her poor desolated sister will never have the aggravated misery of knowing how she has lost all that made her own life comfortable. The extreme degree of her deafness will render it easy to preserve her from every suspicion of the accident. The beloved victim is not yet buried, but lies on the bed, in her clothes, cold and stiff, but with all the placidness of healthy slumber.

It is the lot of few to have lived seventy-nine years with so little suffering. Even health, serenely cheerful temper, a strong, though not lettered understanding, clear judgment, inventive ingenuity, and active industry, winged the hours of her very useful, though retired life;—retired from motives of kindness to her deaf sister, to whom, from that deprived sense, lost ere age came on, ceremonial visits and mixed company were irksome;—yet did my departed friend always receive her intimate acquaintance, and even strangers, introduced by them, with cheerful hilarity; and every stranger went away amused with the specimens of her ingenuity, and warmly pleased with the cordial frankness of her manners. Her moderate fortune was competent to all her unambitious wishes. Her judicious charity aided the poor, while her wise and benevolent counsel assisted, while it soothed, the embarrassed. Punctual in the performance of all her religious duties, yet was her piety never studiously displayed, but it was always perceived and revered.

This fatal mistake of medicine, so calamitous to him who administered it, can for herself be hardly regretted, precluding all the pains and sickness of lingering decay:

"After life's fitful fever she sleeps well;"

and yet her life was neither fitful nor feverish.

From this subject, inevitably, under every consolation, melancholy to all who loved and honoured her, let me pass to one of regret—the disappointed hope of seeing you my guest this spring. I had nursed it, and cannot perceive it vanish without sighs. That tribute had been paid also to poor Mrs Waller's memory a few days before I received your last. She swells the large list of credulous victims to the unfounded pretences of that merciless empiric, Dr T——, whom her credulity first allured from America hither, in an evil hour for numbers; yet nothing warns Miss Reynolds—she has pursued him to Bath, to encounter useless tortures, and to meet accelerated death.

The perils of the times have induced me to withdraw my design of publishing, this spring, my centenary of sonnets, and those paraphrases and imitations of Horace*, which are, in the Monthly Magazine, abused by anticipation. If a poetic work has little celebrity, on its first appearance, be its merits what they may, longer time is likely to elapse than I can hope to live,

* Some of them had appeared in several of the Gentleman's Magazines, in the course of the years 1785 and 1786.—*S.*

before it rises into that fame which genius, sooner or later, never fails to reach;—but the Muses pass neglected in hours of public anxiety, and lose their seat amid political and revolutionary struggles. I, their votary, shrink from the cold atmosphere of national dread and danger,

"And, sighing, hope that warmer days may come."

Anniversaries of periods importantly connected with lost objects of our affection, seldom fail to awaken a great accession of regret. The seventeenth of March is to me also, as to you, a day of sighs,—for it was the birth-day of my ever-dear, though long lost sister, as well as the last of your sweet babe's existence. Honora Sneyd was my child of recompense, as your little Anna is of yours—yes, through nine happy years; she then became lost to me, body, mind, and heart, though not to life till seven years after. More permanent be your source of consolation!

"That star, I hope, will never set to you!"

LETTER LXVI.

THOS. LISTER, ESQ.

Lichfield, April 13, 1797.

MY reproach, in blank verse, to the author of Joan of Arc, not having yet appeared, I conclude the editor of the Morning Chronicle does not purpose its insertion. He cannot think the system of our ministers more execrable than I think it; but the fame of one of the bravest, wisest, most just, and generous of our former monarchs, together with the English character and constitution, should not therefore be calumniated, with impunity, by a savage boy of genius, who, in his late miscellaneous volume, professes to hate the human species. We plainly discern that dislike of the rich and powerful inspires his philippics, and renders vain, to all the purposes of his own happiness, the magnificent present of talents which nature has made him. As in his epic poem, so in his miscellany, not a page but appears strongly illuminated by genius; but the atmosphere is cloudy, the flashes lurid.

I cannot think with you that his sapphics are the best, since, though they and the dactyls present impressive and pathetic pictures, the Greek measures and accents, ill-suited to our language, are extremely harsh to my ear; and since these poems, which are written in the general and received numbers, possess equal originality and spirit.

With the absence of rhymes I can very well dispense; that is not my objection to the dactyls and sapphics. Collins's delicious Ode to Evening has long proved, that where poetic essentials are found, not only blank verse, the oriental style of the sacred bards, and that in which Macpherson has so finely translated Ossian, but the English lyrics themselves, can spare them, not only without ruin, but perhaps without injury to their beauty.

Southey's Ode, written on the 1st of January 1794, is in the measure of Collins's Ode to Evening, and of scarce inferior excellence. It has a striking coincidence of idea to a sonnet of my centenary, written the 31st of December 1782. From my earliest years, even in the piping, dancing time of youth, I never heard the bells ring out the old year, without falling into a similar train of idea to that of my ensuing sonnet, and of Southey's Ode, written twelve years after.

Lo! the year's final day!—Nature performs
Its obsequies with darkness, wind, and rain;
But man is jocund!—Hark! th' exultant strain
From towers and steeples, drowns the wintry storms!
No village spire but to the cots and farms,
Right merrily its scant and tuneless peal
Rings round. Ah, joy ungrateful! mirth insane!
Wherefore the senseless triumph, ye who feel
This annual portion of brief life the while
Depart for ever!—Brought it no dear hours
Of health and night rest?—None that saw the smile
On lips belov'd?—O! with as gentle powers
Will the next pass?—Ye pause!—yet careless hear
Strike these last clocks that knell th' expiring year!

The Pauper's Funeral is very fine; so are the sonnets on the Slave Trade,—and the second division of sonnets appears to me exquisite, especially the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 10th. Though the number of the rhymes is not strictly legitimate, yet the Miltonic breaks in various parts of the lines preserve the sonnet-dignity. The Botany-Bay Eclogues are poetically good, however execrable as to moral. Some of them at least have the worst tendency, encouraging outrageous vice, by imputing it to the oppressive injustice of the state. Falsely imputed, surely, since, if there ever was a government in which honest industry might preserve itself from want, and the attendant temptations, it was that of England, till within these few years at least.

The wild tales, Donica and Rudiger, want neither originality nor sublimity. Mary, the Maid of the Inn, does not equal them, though it will better please the common reader.

Mr Erskine's excellent pamphlet discloses the folly and madness of ministry in driving this nation from her secure eminence, headlong down the belligerent precipice, amidst repeated opportunities of turning aside in the dreadful descent, and reascending to the fertile plains of peace, stretched on its summit, and so fatally, though, perhaps, at first, generously abandoned.

Mr Erskine not only suggests, he demonstrates, the existence of those neglected, those spurned opportunities; yet, lamentable to think of! his detecting pages have been several weeks before the public, and universally read, yet the minister carries all his schemes of depredation, of helpless vengeance, and insane profusion, by majorities that freeze the hopes of true patriotism, while public credit totters to its foundations. Yet a little while, and Dryden's couplet will be verified at full:

> "The discord is complete, nor can they cease
> The dire debate, nor yet command the peace."

Ah! is it not already verified?

God grant us better times!—that we may soon see the pale-convalescent, as peace, such as we are now likely to obtain, is beautifully called in Joan d'Arc, "repairing all she may!"

LETTER LXVII.

Mrs Jackson.

Lichfield, April 17, 1797.

It is at length given me to thank you for one of the most beautiful letters that ever flowed from the pen of genius, entendered by affection, and dictating truth. Sweetly does it moralize on our ever-pleasing, ever-benevolent, yet altered Mr —— whose native warmth of heart seems, by a strange dereliction of feeling, absorbed in an inferior order of being. That a dog is a noble, grateful, faithful animal, we must all be conscious, and deserves a portion of our tenderness and care;—yet, from its utter incapacity of more than glimpses of rationality, there is a degree of insanity, as well as of impoliteness to his acquaintance, and of unkindness to his friends, in lavishing so much more of his attention in the first instance, and of affection

in the latter, upon it than upon them. Justly do you observe, that this is the more to be regretted, because the heart fancies its sensibilities just the while, though, in fact, they are all perverted;—nor is your remark less true, "that we never lose much on the side of manners, till we have lost something on the side of feeling; that the politeness of the heart will act impulsively, while the prime emotions of that heart continue to operate in their purity."

Ah! yes, it is too true that imagination is often substituted for feeling. Never was their difference more finely illustrated than by your simile for that substitution,—"the double-blossom-cherry, wasting itself in promise." Mr ——'s cold silence to me is not yet broken. Five minutes a-day, one month out of three, subtracted from the time every day passed in caressing his dog, would have preserved our correspondence, and spared my heart the conviction, that all his former protestations of eternal interest in me and mine, have melted from his remembrance, beneath the strong sunshine of his late prosperity.

So Mason is no more! We should exclaim, "mourn all ye muses," if he had died ere he published his recent volume, exhibiting, amongst some poetic beauties, mortifying proof, on the whole, of genius chilled, and of judgment enfeebled by

time. Mason had virtues, and to a very few friends was, I am told, frank and engaging; but in general, his manners were so haughty, cold, and repulsive, that numbers, who had adored the author, were disgusted with the man. To them, and to the world in general, he had shone remotely, like a star, whose light we perceive without feeling its warmth.

More than ever do I long to see your tragedy, now you tell me that the hero is a dramatized * Falkland. That character is eminently capable of receiving added dignity and grandeur from poetic language; of approaching nearer to Shakespeare's brave and great man, demonized, than even Jephson's Count de Narbonne, which I have always considered as our modern Macbeth.

You will admire the new proof of strong poetic talent in Southey's late miscellaneous volume, and lament the dark misanthrophy, that withers all the joys of intellectual superiority—all the hopes of his future life. We feel that he is unamiable; and the pathetic pictures he draws of human misery, are evidently given not to soften the heart to charitable and bestowing pity, but to steel it with contempt and detestation of human nature. In an advertisement, he has set his prose mark of

* The principal character in the novel Caleb Williams.—*S.*

scorn upon one of the noblest orders of verse, the Ode, whose style is so various, and equally adapted to the sublime, the moral, the tender and the playful cast of idea, as Pindar, Sappho, Anacreon, and Horace, have shown us among the ancients—Collins, Gray, Mason, Akenside, and Prior, &c. &c. among the moderns; while an ode of his own, on the 1st of January 1794, is the brightest gem of his volume—neither does it contain any of those dark traits of spleen, so generally apparent in his writings; it is melancholy without vindictive bitterness.

I have lately, for the first time, read Camilla—and with more pleasure, and much higher degree of esteem for the powers of mind it displays, than general opinion had taught me to expect. It has many beauties, as well as some absurdities. The most striking of the latter is, that which yet in a greater degree infests the Cecilia—bringing vulgar low characters into parties and conversations, where they are never endured in real life. If I was not more interested, I was certainly much more diverted with this work than either with Evelina or Cecilia. Sir Hugh appears to me a character as well supported—as admirably conceived; original on the page, without our feeling that it is out of nature. There is great ingenuity in preserving, without a moment's desertion, a c:

of language so singular. The naïveté of his oddities convulses me with laughter, and never abates of that power. I have known more than one Dr Orkbourn, and I think I know the original of Sir Sedley Clarendon, a man of fashion of my acquaintance, and much in high life. Mrs Arlbury is a finely drawn wit of the beau monde. I remember the present Duchess of Cumberland, when Miss A. Lutterel, and afterwards Mrs Horton, and she was exactly that character. Living then in near vicinity to this city, she frequented all our public meetings, of which she was the grace and the life, though with as perfect an independence of general opinion, as the fine lady of these volumes. Eugenia, though amiable, appears to me the least natural personage. Her credulity in believing it possible a handsome man of the world could fall in love with her at a ball, no solemnity of protestation on the man's part could render natural, in a creature represented without that vanity, which is so often found in hideous-looking women; especially as she retains that credulity after her eyes had been opened to her own personal deformity;—but her father's reasoning with her on the despair that discovery first excited, is admirable and very useful philosophy. Clearly does it prove, that uncommon beauty, unaccompanied by powers of mind, to

preserve the consequence of its possessor, when that fugitive boon begins to vanish, must be a source of more enduring misery in its wane and departure, than it had been of happiness in its meridian. Is not the idiot-experiment sublime? There is, I think, no circumstance so grand in its impressions in all this author's writings.

The excess of Camilla's indiscretions pass the line of consistency with goodness of heart, especially her debts for finery, contracted at the persuasion of a woman she despises. They are less in probability than her wretched brother's, whose heart, corrupted by vice, could not be expected to make any stand against the contagion of bad example; but how unlikely that she, who could so justly reproach his errors, on the score of want of feeling, should, unwarned, be herself similarly, though not in equal degree, guilty. Indianas are to be found everywhere, and the governess is of no innumerous class.

Doubtless you have read Mr Erskine's convincing pamphlet; but the obstinate blindness of our ministerial city is not to be couched out of its approbation of our insane rulers. Pitt is the polestar of its inhabitants; while they see him in the zenith, no national storms can appal—can alarm them, short of their bursting. The senseless exultations I hear in these hours of peril, try my pa-

tience, and too often baffle it. I am, as a correspondent of my friend Simpson's expresses it, clearly aware that "the state-coach, in which we are passengers, is driving on the extremest verge of a dreadful precipice; while it is the very reverse of comfort, that my fellow-travellers are exclaiming, "How merrily we ride!"

I am not in health: hope the spring rises on your corporealities with better auspices, and that you have no heart-sickness from the law's delay. Adieu!

LETTER LXVIII.

SIR BROOKE BOOTHBY.

Lichfield, May 7, 1797.

THANK you, dear Sir Brooke, for your obliging letter, and for the poetic treasures of the packet.

The prophecies of the minority are awfully fulfilling, to their very letter. We shall hear no more blustering about the Netherlands—the cry of children for the moon. They are gathered to the tribe of vanished motives for ruinous enmity, and

we are deserted by every ally:—" star after star goes out, and all is night."

What shadow of benefit to either our coadjutors or ourselves, have our lavished millions procured, while they have augmented our national debt to such fatal magnitude? The idolaters of ministry cannot answer that question now, yet cease not to clamour out their praises of our destroyers, as if they had won the benefits they have so madly lost.

Lending Mason's lately published volume to others ere I had myself read half its contents, I was a stranger, when last we met, to the Palinodia. Yesterday the book returned, and I looked for that poem with very excited curiosity. I never saw Mr Mason, or had any transactions with him; but from instances I have heard given of his conduct to others, from splenetic and insolent speeches of his which reached me, I have long believed, that, with all his glowing imagination, he had a morose temper, a haughty spirit, a cold heart. His attempt to brand Mr Fox in that absurd annotation, could, I think, only proceed from a disposition so organized. Whatever might be Mason's distrust of that gentleman's integrity, yet his struggles against the commencement and continuance of this disastrous war, so clearly prove his right to be entitled the People's Friend, that

exasperated dotage could alone venture to spurn it in hours like these. Justly might you have termed such malignance feeble, but I cannot think the Palinodia deserves that epithet.

I can have no prejudice in favour of his writings, whose general disposition I so much disliked. I sat down to read the poem in question with an expectation of disgust, and I rose gratified from the perusal. Excepting two or three verbal infelicities, it appears to me one of the very few fine poems in this volume. "The fiend of democratic tyranny, riding on the sulphurous tube drawn by tigers, where seas of blood roll their increasing tides beneath its wheels, as they pass over groaning myriads," is as grand, and as just an image, as the meridian of Mason's genius ever produced.

Nor less just is the distinction in this palinode between the lawless and cruel licentiousness of France, since her revolution and genuine liberty. Manly and ingenuous is his acknowledgment, that he had rejoiced in the destruction of her old despotism, unapprehensive that a tyranny would supply the place, to which its direst cruelties were tender mercies.

> "When Ruin, heaving his gigantic mace,
> Call'd to the deed by Reason's voice,
> Crush'd, proud Bastile! thy turrets to their base,
> Was it not virtue to rejoice?

"That power alone, whose all-combining eye
Beside what he ordains, Futurity,
Cou'd that tremendous truth reveal,
That, ere six suns had round the zodiac roll'd
Their beams, astonish'd Europe should behold
All Gallia one immense Bastile."

O! let us not be dazzled by the victories of France, out of our remembrance of her revolutionary barbarities—out of our virtuous abhorrence of her crimes, which we should have left Heaven to punish, since to us she was not accountable;—but let not this nation be induced, by the mad misuse of power at home, to adopt her miserable principles. My whole soul assents to the justness of this Palinodia, where it asserts, that the blessings of freedom "can never crown the vicious and the vain." Milton's twelfth sonnet is a similar palinode. Doubtless it was severely censured by the abusers of the liberty themselves had fought for; but it is now cited to the honour of Milton, who suffered not party zeal to blind him to the vices of those who were ruining the cause of freedom—as France would have done, had monarchs been wise enough to have looked on as calmly as they surveyed the temporary destruction of kindred monarchy in England.

I have been vainly searching for your letter to Mr Burke; but surely I recollect, in that very

able work, as utter reprobation of French conduct since the revolution, as can be found in Mason's Palinodia—which I must think your poetically fine sonnet calumniates, while it justly reproves the injustice of his absurd note in the Ode to Pitt —that ode which hurls the pointless sneer at Mr Fox, whose counsels had England followed, in abstaining from fomenting and joining the dire war, she would have found that he deserved the title of the People's Friend. We shall soon, I am afraid, severely feel who has been her foe; but what can be said for the insanity of men of property who supported measures, that, for the last three years, have been demonstrably ruinous, by the experience of facts, and by the deduction of reason.

> "O! we have liv'd in such an idiot-period,
> That whoso marvels at the public folly
> May pass thro' life, feeling no other passion
> Than black astonishment."

Adio!

LETTER LXIX.

RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER.

Lichfield, May 22, 1797.

I SEIZE the earliest leisure to assure your Ladyship how welcome the letter before me, which pronounces my acquittal of inattention to a correspondence which can never, on my part, be voluntarily neglected. I may say, with Jaffier,

> ———" Indeed, I dare not,
> The heart, that awes me, is too much my master;"

—but no syllable have I heard of your Ladyship's letter, entrusted to the gentleman you allude to. If unforeseen circumstances delayed his purposed journey through Lichfield, he ought, long ago, to have forwarded it by the post. He must know the ungrateful appearance to which such detention would subject me. May he not be written to? Is there no recovering this letter? I cannot endure to sit down quiet under its loss.

Nothing is more dishonourable than inattention to epistolary commissions.—They are sacred trusts

Friendships have been dissolved by their violation, and the events of an whole life thrown out of their natural and best course. Ah! how finely do you descant on the already commenced miseries of Ireland, and impending misfortunes of this country! What mournful beauty in that too just question,—"To what part of Europe can we now turn our eyes, in which we shall not meet the embryo images of future woes?" Fatally spreads the pestilential taint of insubordinate principles. It is fed by the astonishing, the dazzling successes of our foes. Those horrid crimes and overwhelming miseries, through which France waded to her now proud eminence of conquest and territorial acquisition, are all forgotten by her emulators here. Pernicious madmen! succeeding in their revolutionary schemes, what will they do?—they may practise her crimes, they may overturn, inflict, and endure her miseries; but Europe, ruined and subjected to France, offers them no triumphs, no extension of empire, that might compensate to their pride the unmotived sacrifice of home-comforts, legal protection, and public tranquillity;—unmotived as, on the part of ministry, the rash persisting in a fruitless, a desperate contest, which has put our own safety into peril so imminent. I dread lest ministerial rashness, obstinacy, and

pride, should enable the horrid democrats to establish their plan of anarchy. O! let us turn from the dark, the lurid prospect!

Mr Roberts told me he did not think it impossible that I might be favoured with a visit from your Ladyship and Miss Ponsonby. Was this the flattery of his sanguine temper, kindly desirous of my gratification, and prone to believe what he wished, or was it grounded upon an indulgent hint of such a purpose? If the latter, when may I look for so welcome an arrival?

Surely the Bishop of St Asaph has been wrong in having given the living of Langollen, without any stipulation for residence, any curb upon the tyrannous and fleecing spirit of avarice. At all times the duty, in times like these it is of the last importance to the interest of bishops, and to the safety of the state, to be careful into whose hands they commit the pastoral charge,

> "When the rapacious wolves prowl round the fence,
> To leap into the fold."—

I mean those wolves who wish to overturn the establishment totally.—Every negligent and extortionate clergyman promotes their views.

I assured myself that my New-Year's Eve sonnet would please you above all its brethren of my collection. I confess it is my first favourite. That

which closes my Langollen Vale publication, and which you have honoured by such very warm praise, has, I think, many equals, poetically at least, in this my large family of sonnets, which, already prepared for the press, await the dawn of a brighter public horizon—if that blessing should ever be ours. The sonnet I sent in my last packet, and which is addressed to the month of March, has, to my ear, very harmonious numbers; and presents a simple yet striking and entirely original picture of the chilled group I have often joined, in days of youth and strength, on a morning's ramble,

> ———" When violets dim
> Do come before the swallow dares, and give
> Bleak winds of March their sweetness."

It gratifies me that your Ladyship shares my passion for surveying the living terrors of the desert. I wonder the sight of savage animals should not be as generally, and as much the delight of cultivated as of uncultivated minds. Last November, I hazarded breaking my limbs in ascending a booth in which they were exhibited. Mr Saville, who always hastens to such spectacles, tempted me by his description of the laughing Hyæna. Its expression of rage is a horrid laugh, exactly that of human insanity, only much louder than any human

lungs are competent to produce. Never did I hear a sound so violent and appalling.

While I gaze upon these formidable creatures, my imagination always presents the danger of wandering in the scenes they haunt:

> "What if the lion in his rage I meet;
> Oft in the dust I view his printed feet!"

My consciousness of safety luxuriates beneath the secure view of these sublimely terrible animals, in the sound of their howl and of their roar; while devout thankfulness for our climate's blessed exemptions, exalts and sanctifies the gratulation of egotism.

You will have the goodness, dearest Madam, to mention me affectionately to Miss Ponsonby, and to believe that my attachment to both is fervent, equal, and unalterable. I remain, &c.

LETTER LXX.

Mrs Childers, of Yorkshire.

Lichfield, May 30, 1797.

Perfectly am I assured, that inclination can have no share in the seldomness of epistolary intercourse between you and me; that it results merely from the number of our mutual engagements.

Your cold, I hope, proved only a town-seasoner, unattended by those asthmatic consequences which you seemed to dread. Obstructed respiration is a terrible feeling when it is in the excess you describe. That disorder has infested my frame these past seven years:—never, indeed, in any violent extreme, but in a sufficient degree to make walking uncomfortable on ground not perfectly even; —yet I force myself to take that exercise every day, a mile in the morning, and another in the afternoon, either without or within doors. This large old mansion, whose apartments open into each other without steps; this mansion, which I have had the happiness of inhabiting from girlhood, so pleasant in its *rus in urbe* situation, and

on a thousand accounts so dear, is very convenient for my pedestrian and diurnal discipline,

> "When the chill blustering winds and driving rains
> Prevent our willing feet."

My health has been very indifferent this spring. During the last seven years, the vernal season has not been to me salubrious. It seems as if the recent disorders in my frame put forth with the leaves. Melancholy, to feel in ourselves the symptoms of painful decay, when scenic nature is all vitality and bloom, and when the comforts and delights of merely animal life are so visibly increased, so rapturously awakened! Yet it is not in the pensiveness, which results from selfish contrast, to stifle, in benevolent hearts, the thrill of sympathetic pleasure, amid the renovation of the earth, and the felicity of instinctive beings.

This sweet and generous sympathy will arise in your mind with all its force, in a day or two, when you shall exchange the noisy bustle of the capital, and all its varied gratifications to the ear and eye, for the simple delights of rural nature, now that her beauty is so nearly consummate, and in her freshest and most fragrant time. Where the mind is rich in self-resources, the mere silence of the fields and lawns, unbroken, except by the lowing

of cattle, the bleating of sheep, and the song of birds, after the din of the hot Babel, is deliciously agreeable. On quitting London in the bloomy spring-time, that silence used to fall upon my ear, grateful as the "honey heavy dew of slumber" on wearied eye-lids.

I am glad you procured masters for the young ladies, so capable of improving their talents. You mention the opera, and, making no complaints of it, I trust the crying sins of voluptuousness and indecency, laid to its charge in the public prints, were given with a peevish spirit of needless prudery. We are told, and we read, that the dancers, of both sexes, appeared almost entirely naked, from the tight vests of flesh-coloured sattin in which they exhibited; that their attitudes were lascivious in the extreme; and consequently that the opera was now an improper spectacle for the modest female eye.

Have you seen our neighbour, Mr Gisborne's Duties of Man and Duties of Women? They are books of high reputation, and certainly contain many excellent things. Admirable receipt-books, it must be confessed, to make human angels; but I think both are too strict, and might have been more generally useful upon a less rigid plan of admonition, especially the volume dedicated to females. Ill could the volatile and joyous spirit

of my youth have borne curbs so continual, and such Argus-eyed watchfulness. Remembering the innocent nature of these trusted pleasures, which Mr G.'s system would restrain as dangerous, he cannot teach me to consider such restraints necessary, where the young heart is pure, or capable of improving it where it is otherwise.

I am sorry for the death of Mrs Mitford, first announced to me by your pen. The perfect friendship, which appeared to subsist between that Lady and her ingenious and pleasing daughters, will make this life-lasting separation a source of long regret. Ah! it is always too soon to lose a kind parent—at least affectionate children cannot but think so: that misfortune, however, is much greater than it can be to Miss Mitfords, to infant daughters, or such as are either rising into womanhood, or are yet in its early stage;

> "For, in the morn, and liquid dew of youth,
> Contagious blightings are most imminent;"

and preservation from them is best found in a mother's assiduous and indulgent cares. May that blessing long be your Harriet's! Surely a juvenility of appearance, uncommon as yours, extends a promise that it will be;—a promise responsible as frail human life knows to make; and encourages

even the hope that your chaperonship may be claimed for children of her own, when she may be engaged or indisposed.

So Yorkshire has lost her venerable bard,

"Whose youth she nurs'd along her marshy shores."

His last volume exhibits some fine passages in most of its poems; two or three pleasing sonnets; one exquisite song; and a church-yard elegy, that would have pleased every genuine admirer of poetic composition, if he had not vainly seemed to place it in competition with the superior work of his deceased friend which bears the same title. Yet, on the whole, the contents of this volume are so much below his former productions, that, for his poetic reputation, it were perhaps to be wished that he had died a year sooner;—that none of the crude fruits of his unripened fancy, or the vapidly mellow ones of its decaying season, had been joined to those nectarines and pines which descended to us, matured by its meridian sun.

Shall you exclaim—What a long preachment! Ah! the letters will be voluntarily long, which have been involuntarily seldom. Yours, &c.

LETTER LXXI.

Mrs Powys of Berwick.

Lichfield, June 13, 1797.

I am sincerely concerned, dearest Madam, for the long-continued, and, I fear, increased disorder in your eyes. However your correspondents may regret, they cannot surely resent the silence which has so deplored a source.

Obliged and honoured by your invitation to Berwick, I have yet no prospect, this year, of being able to accept it. Maladies, different in their nature, but alike coercive in their claims, rob me of many pleasures. Impelling my course wide from that of the Severn and the Dee, is amongst the most regretted of their tyrannies. Mr and Mrs Whalley have also pressed my visiting them on their romantic mountain in August; but neither can that be.

My disorders being those for which the Buxton and Harrowgate waters are esteemed most beneficial, induce me to think of trying them both again this summer. I shall esteem myself fortunate if I may meet you at Buxton. At last,

upon the tranquil state of the kingdom my going from home at all, this summer, will depend. If it becomes more convulsed, I shall have no resolution to wander, and my apprehensions have been gloomy on the subject. That gloom is now abated, at least in some degree, beneath the gleams of light, which, through the medium of Sunday's newspapers, gilded the darkness of our national horizon. The naval mutiny, of such gigantic danger to England, subsiding, and likely to be subdued,—Ireland quieter,—and peace dawning, though but faintly, on the long-baffled hopes of this country, sick of a ruinous and fruitless contest!

I am sure you have sympathized, sincerely as myself, with the alarms of the dear ladies of Langollen Vale, for their native Ireland, and for the many friends and connections yet dear to them in that kingdom. My consciousness that the serenity of their delightful plan of life has been disturbed and wounded by these alarms, and by the impending dangers of England, increases my fruitless desire of conversing with them orally before this tardy and sullen summer, and the probably brighter hours of autumn, shall speed rapidly away.

Ah! how time, as life advances, seems to accelerate his pace. It is true as strange, that we

did not feel that he fled so fast, when youth and health inspirited his progress. Should not one suppose that pain, imbecility, sorrow, care, and disappointment, would ideally retard it? The probable reason of the reverse-fact, which has, till now, appeared to me an insolvable enigma, this instant occurs to my reflections, thus:—nothing makes time appear so long as expectation, whether pleasurable or painful. Youth is full of expectations; is always pressing forward. To its ardent eyes the future, like the distant parts of the field on which we walk, seems covered with flowers, and we are impatient to attain it. Declining life leans upon the present, and pensively luxuriates on the pleasures, such as they were, of the past. Experience has wintered the aspect of the future, and we rather fear than long for its arrival. Our reflection, how small the portion of existence which remains to us, renders the departure of years, months, even days, a subject of regret, inspired by the natural love of life,—life which, like a snow-ball,

"The closer grasp'd, the faster melts away."

Thus time seems to creep when we wish it should fly, and flies when we would retard its progress:

" Time, to the young, behind him hides his wings,
And seems to creep, decrepit with his age.
Behold him when past by!—What then is seen
But his broad pinions, swifter than the wind?"

I wonder that tidings of poor Mrs Norberry's death, which happened in the winter, did not sooner reach you. A melancholy instance of the trustless flattery of youth and prosperity. Yet her long, though very patiently-endured sufferings, made their close desirable to those who loved her most.

It gives me pleasure to observe, that you have been misinformed respecting the present state of the pleasing and eloquent Mr Madan's health. Much improved of late, I trust it gives not any omen of transient existence. His father, the active, nimble, and pleasant Bishop of Peterborough, is at the Colonel's with his lately married lady. Her serene virtues make him very happy; and, in the frankness of his heart, he boasts of them to everybody. The berries of holly, with which Hymen formed that garland, blush through the snows of time, and dispute the prize of happiness with the roses of youth;—and they are certainly less subject to the blights of expectation and palling fancy. Adieu.

LETTER LXXII.

MRS STOKES.

Lichfield, June 15, 1797.

AT length the sword of desolation is sheathed on the continent! Daily and fervently do I pray that England may not be excluded from the general blessing, Peace. Yet I much fear that the king and his ministers will be yet farther punished, for having refused that mediation with the Germanic powers, which was solicited by the unhappy Louis XVI., a short time before his deposition, and which would probably have preserved his life and crown, and saved the deluge of blood that has flowed in consequence of this disastrous war.

Our court again extends overtures which they call, and now, I believe, with sincerity, pacific—but, in all common policy, it behoves them to choose an ambassador, on this momentous mission, who has not publickly sided with the Quixotes of the war;—who has perceived and deplored its rashness, without vindicating the bloody tyranny of that dire republic, which, resistless as its force has

proved, yet, by the confession of the French officers now in Lichfield, as well as by the testimony of all its annals, inflicts more misery on its deluded subjects, than ever resulted from the despotism of monarchy.

If an ambassador is sent, in whose desire of peace the sensible part of the nation has confidence—who will not, like Lord Malmsbury, set out with asking for the *moon*—then if, as I fear it will prove, the claims of France should be too exorbitant for the concession of any man who is not a traitor to his country, that country will more patiently submit to the inevitable continuance of the struggle, than it will under the present ministry, and defend itself with spirit, when the existence of its national independence is really at stake; for we know that consideration was made the stalking-horse of the war when peace would have effectually secured it.

I should have written to you sooner, but you know how short and contracted is my epistolary leisure. Lichfield is so vast a thoroughfare, that I wish my distant friends and acquaintance would be less ready to give notes and letters of recommendation, except in cases of particular attachment, or from the consciousness that the individuals who apply for them, possess the species of talents which would recompense the suspension of per-

haps pressing employment, and gratify more than the frivolous curiosity of those who seek introduction. Let it be remembered, that the conversation of a stranger, without literary taste in some degree congenial to our own, must be much less pleasant than that of a neighbour, whose powers of mind may yet be on no higher ground of intellect; since with the latter, the little events of the town and environs, prove sources of mutual communication, which are often in some degree interesting, where no feast of reason or flow of soul can be expected.

Mrs T—— and her eldest daughter are become inhabitants of our city. She had given me no previous intimation of such a design. Mr and Mrs Zachary* were with me up stairs in my book-room on Tuesday se'ennight, when, at eight o'clock in the evening, my servant came in to say a stranger-lady was below, who wished to see me alone. Going down stairs to attend her, I met Mr Saville in the gallery, who whispered as he passed me—"Mrs T——, or I am much mistaken." This was a mere presentiment, inspired by her appearance—and it prepared me for the possibility. Though in the wane of beauty, a figure finely proportioned, with an air of fashion and elegance;

* Mrs Zachary is Mrs Stokes' sister.—S.

features that had evidently been lovely, and are still pleasing, with a very animated countenance, accosted me thus: "At this instant the vision of my life is realized." Such an address seemed to fulfil the Savillian prophecy, and I scrupled not to reply—"Mrs T——, I am sure." In a few minutes I persuaded her to join my party up stairs. She interested your brother and sister extremely.

I waited upon her the next day. On my requesting to see herself and Miss T—— to pass an early day at my house, she said her daughter was ill in bed, but when she was well enough to come out, or to be left, she would accept my invitation. —She did so, and we have since been frequently together. Miss T—— is about sixteen, not handsome, but very accomplished both in music and painting, with all the reserve and serious modesty of her father, Colonel T——'s character. As Mrs T—— has been her almost sole instructor, her acquirements, and the politeness of her manners, do the highest credit to that Lady's maternal attentions. Her younger sister is at school, and I am told has an exquisite voice, and sings very finely. This young Lady only plays on the harpsichord and piano-forte—but with such fancy and brilliance, rapidity of touch, and neatness of execution, as few attain at any period of life, out

of the profession pale. Mrs T—— was educated in Paris, and lived there till she married. The gaiety of French manners still prevails in her appearance and conversation, over all the infelicities of her destiny. Many of her dearest friends, and some of her relations, have been the victim of that infernal guillotine;—while all her own talents and accomplishments are wasted upon a cold and prepossessed ingrate, whose very virtues, by exciting her esteem, have embittered her regrets;—and her darling and gallant son is unfortunate, through a taste for expence, which has embarrassed them all. Her health is also impaired, and her mind assaulted by apprehensions of that dire bosom-disease, which I had the misery of dreading during more than two years!—Ah! what evils! But she describes these complicated sorrows without the least corresponding dejection of countenance.

New intimacies with people residing in this place are not desirable to me. If I do not pass much more time than I can conveniently spare with this Lady, who professes such hyperbole of attachment to me, who declares my society to be the magnet which has allured her hither, I know the horror I have of appearing ungrateful will give a continual sense of dejection to my spirits.

You had not seen White's anecdotes of me in the Monthly Mirror last winter, when you adjured

me to write my life. I do not wish to say more of myself than is there said, and I am sure I do not know how to say it better. My long habit of transcribing into a book every letter of my own which appears to me worth the attention of the public, omitting the passages which are totally without interest for any one but those to whom they are addressed, has already filled several volumes. After my death, at least, if not in my lifetime, it is my design that they shall be published. They will faithfully reflect the unimportant events of my life, rendered in some degree interesting, from being animated by the present-time sentiments and feelings of my heart—at least more interesting than a narrative of past occurrences could possibly prove. To sit formally down to such a task of egotism, would extremely revolt my sensations—and, were I inclined to undertake it, I have absolutely no time.

Mr Saville, without receding an atom from his ministerial idolatry, is grown quite attached to the amiable French officers, now captives in our city. Their conversation is not calculated to enamour us of democratic government. I think it is plainly to be perceived they wish it had never taken place. They do not absolutely say so, but when liberty, as it is called, is the theme, they sigh and

shake their heads, as conscious that yet it has produced no solid good comforts in France.

Nothing on literary themes, could surprise me more than your decision respecting Mason, viz. that "the fire of genius was not great in his compositions." Look, I implore, at his Monody, written at twenty, on the death of Pope—see it commanding the various styles of Spenser, Milton, and Pope, in the most graceful and spirited assumption; and forming those happy imitations into a beautiful funeral poem, upon a new plan! —Remember the exquisite Grecian dramas; the lyric powers and touching pathos of the Elfrida; —the gloomy grandeur of the Caractacus!—Remember his detached lyric odes;—the sublimity of that on the Fall of Babylon,—the picturesque charms, and manly dignity of sentiment in that to Independence;—and the wild original graces of that to a Water Nymph! Above all, reflect that he was the known, though not acknowledged author of those inimitable satires, the Epistle to Sir W. Chambers, and the Postscript, and the Epistle from an unfortunate Elector of Hanover to his friend, Mr Pinchbeck;—which last, in strength of fancy, happiness of classic allusion, keenness of covert reproach, and poetic magnificence of style, exceeds any poetic satire I have read—not excepting even Pope's.

Sir Brooke Boothby, a critic coy, and hard to please, agreed with me, the other day, that, his versatility of style considered, and the distinguished excellence with which he wrote in all, Mason stands very high indeed on the poetic scale—that even as a lyric poet solely, he ranks but one degree below Gray, who was unquestionably the first lyric poet the world has produced—that, though that world has given us some greater poets than Mason, their number is few.

If my paper would allow me to launch into quotations, I could produce such a phalanx of grand and of lovely passages from Mason, as must be invulnerable to the darts of prejudice, though with ineffectual hand it might hurl them. I can trust my own feelings, which I know are not to be thrilled, as Mason's poetry has always thrilled them, by compositions in which the "fire of genius is not great." I grant his lately published volume is "a falling off indeed." Compared to his other works, it is the Paradise Regained to the Paradise Lost, which, respecting the talents of Milton, might have their titles reversed.

I wonder what makes Dr Stokes such a petulant and sickly-tasted critic. To decry episodes of sentiment, allegory, or narrative, in didactic composition, is a singular morbidity in criticism. They have ever been considered as enlivening and

adorning the style of precept and instruction—not only affording the charm of variety, but relieving the attention of the reader. Thomson's sweet little narratives are universally and justly admired —and yet the dignified Nerina, in Mason's English Garden, is the poetic superior of Thomson's Amelia, Lavinia, or Musidora.

At the instant I closed the last sentence, I took the charming poem, which she inspirits, from my book-shelves, and have attentively perused that last book, so inconceivably censured by Dr Stokes. Well did I remember having always thought it rose in excellence above the three preceding cantos of the English Garden, beautiful as they are. My tears, which renewed their tribute to the pathos of its story, are yet wet on my cheek. Afresh did my judgment admire the skill with which that vivid episode is connected with the didactic design of the whole poem; so naturally introducing new precepts for attaining excellence in planning the landscapes of pleasure-ground; and also a novel and highly-improved design for a conservatory. In this respect, Mason is very superior to Thomson;—but indeed the purpose of the former is more professedly preceptive.

From a physician, who had ever tasted poetry at all, I should have expected a warm eulogium on

the anatomic truth and nature in this description of the dying Nerina.—It has Homeric accuracy.

This last perusal places the final book of the English Garden higher than ever in my estimation. So will it always be with poetic excellence. Familiarity endears it. New beauties disclose themselves on every repetition. O how divine is that noble apostrophe which closes the work!

The Doctor deigned to like the three first books—but taking a whimsical antipathy to the superior fourth, he says, "it dissolved the enchantment, and left an unfavourable impression of the whole." Suppose it had, in reality, been inferior, wherefore should such inferiority rob its brethren of their right to the grateful sense and admiring remembrance of the reader? How very illiberal is such decision! The two last books of Milton's great work are, by universal testimony, in spite of some fine passages, heavy, dull, and prosing, in comparison of all the others, except the sixth, which has also great inferiority. What should we think of a critic who was to declare that those, so much less poetic books, had dissolved the enchantment of that work?—who was, therefore, to spurn the Paradise Lost? Yet the case would be in point, if indeed Mason had equally degenerated. Nor should it be forgotten, that one of the most admired of Shakespeare's

plays, his Hamlet, falls off in the two last acts most lamentably. O! it is so much in the grudging spirit of modern criticism, to judge the merit of a recent author's claims to celebrity by his defects, whether real or imaginary, and not as they ought to be judged, by his confessed excellencies! The authors of past ages are more equitably treated. We do not deny the general resplendence of their orbs, because we perceive spots on their disk. Adieu!

LETTER LXXIII.

THOS. PARK, ESQ.

Lichfield, July 11, 1797.

I AM sorry to have been so many months silent, but I could not help it. I have long been very busy, and recently very ill. Violent, dangerous, and repeated hemorrhage at my nose, has left me very weak and languid. The bleeding was accompanied by fever, and one of its numerous attacks preceded by a convulsion fit.

Your sentiments on the war are entirely mine;

though I confess, that on its onset on the part of England, I thought all the surrounding nations had right and justice on their side, in opposing systematic insubordination, massacre, anarchy, and atheism. Impartial attention to the arguments on each side that momentous theme soon taught my understanding a different lesson. I do not pretend to innate perceptions in politics; but on that, or on any other subject, I always bring a mind sufficiently free from prejudice, and open to conviction, to be able, when the full strength of adverse reasoning is mutually put forth, clearly to discern what is truth, and what is sophistry. Thus I became convinced, very early in the conflict, that monarchs and states ought to leave to Heaven the revenge of internal national guilt, in every country not legally subject to their controul.

But even had my first ideas concerning our right of interference remained unchanged, our early-apparent incapacity to exterminate by force the baleful principle of disorganization, would have prompted me to abhor the belligerent madness of our government, in pursuing an unavailing struggle, at the expense of the best blood of our people, and of cruel depredations upon the means of comfortable life in every class, except that of the superfluously affluent.

Finely do you term this war "a reciprocal contest to produce national mendicancy." Yet, while I echo your censures, I still think we owe to patriotism, to virtue, and to religion, our expressed abhorrence of Jacobin principles. Hence I can never repent my anathema in verse upon the unconstitutional sentiments contained in Joan of Arc, and upon their injustice to the character of our gallant Henry V. It is not my intention to exile my philippic from the press eternally, though I recalled it for the present;—unwilling, beneath the pending pacific negotiation, in which I trust our hot-brained government is at last sincere, to say any thing with my pen, which might feed the general hatred of this country towards its too successful foes. Good hearts will, I trust, always have the wisdom to disdain their wild unstable theories, and to feel horror at the remembrance of their tyrannic cruelties, and avowed impi-ty.

To the preservation of those honestly-indignant feelings, so important to the weal of England, my reproach to the author of Joan of Arc tends, and solely tends. The desire of lessening the sale of his grand, though unpatriotic poem, had not the least share, as you seem to think it had, in stimulating my reprehension, or my original design of publishing it this spring in the newspapers. I was

conscious of the very different effect which, as you justly observe, all public attacks upon compositions which are before the world, invariably produce. I am too ardent in the common poetic cause, not to wish the highest poetic celebrity to a work of such exalted genius as Joan of Arc; but I would not have its intellectual splendours dazzle the British heart into adoption of its very pernicious principles.

The expectation of peace, so generally prevalent, glows not in my bosom. To be sure, there is no moon to cry for now; but I am afraid the measure of punishment is not yet full to the Court of England, for that "its feet were swift to shed blood." When I thought the war against France, in the hour of her enormities, justifiable, I did not know that our government had cruelly refused the earnest petition of the unfortunate Louis XVI., for its mediation with the Austrian and Prussian powers, to prevent their hostilities against France. That it was in the power of England to have prevented them, I believe there is little doubt. Then great and prosperous, she might have been the pacific arbitress of Europe. Her refusal to interfere, was fatal to the Bourbon family, and deluged the continent with blood. Foreign invasion inspired the fatal jealousy of that monarch, which destroyed him. England, reduced to the brink of

ruin by her unjust and desperate contest with America, restored by the blessings of a ten years peace to prosperity, to glory, which gave her such immense weight in the scale of Europe, ought to have known the infinite superiority in rational value, of the olive to the laurel, and done her utmost to have quenched the kindling conflagration.

People say to me, "I do flatter myself we shall now have peace." I reply, "flatter!—ah! 'tis an ill-omened word!" Is there not the utmost probability that France, beneath the banners of her victories, will exact such concession from Britain, as no honest British ambassador can accede to. Many were the opportunities we spurned of making a very advantageous peace; but those times are now past. Much, therefore, did it behove our monarch not to have left it to those ministers to negotiate on the present occasion, on whom the odium of a war so ruinous justly rests. Had the diplomatic powers been vested in the hands of men whose counsels had always been pacific in this contest, then, on their standing forth to say, "we should have made peace, if terms had not been asked, wholly incompatible with the safety of England," the nation would with more firmness have met the dreadfully increasing burdens of continued war, than it will do when exacted by those who originally involved us in its

complicated miseries. Mr Pitt is another Duke of Buckingham, to whom the King, like unhappy Charles, is fatally devoted.—I dread the consequences.

The partizans of ministry now exclaim, that the disastrous result of our continuance of the war could not be foreseen, and is plainly the effect of an overruling providence. The effrontery, as well as folly of the assertion, is palpable—since the result was foreseen—the natural consequences of their obstinacy daily thundered in the ears of government. Is it the way to make ministers in future wiser guardians of the public safety, to impute the mischiefs, inevitable upon their measures, to the decree of God? Statesmen, as well as women, would doubtless

> "Be glad to hear the nation say,
> Their stars are more in fault than they."

With equal absurdity we hear it pronounced, that, by the war alone, a revolution here was prevented. Now, if the war was the preventive of that evil, it certainly follows that the return of peace must occasion it; and it also follows that we have no alternative but eternal war with France, or the overturn of this constitution. Mr Burke's last regicide rhapsody avows the principle. Now, if the large majority of the nation are, as I

hope and believe, yet loyal, under all their taxes, upon how much a firmer basis did that loyalty stand before the trebled accumulation of pecuniary burdens, which the war was sure to occasion! The danger of revolt in England is therefore trebled, aye, ten times trebled, by the duration of the fruitless contest, and must increase with its protraction. Peace alone can save the constitution, and undisturbed peace would have averted every peril which government has incurred. Adieu!

LETTER LXXIV.

The Rev. F. Jauncey.

Hoyle Lake, Aug. 9, 1797.

Dr Jones fearing, from the exhausting nature of my late indisposition, that I had not strength to encounter the crowds of Buxton and Harrowgate, advised coast-residence. The comparative quietness of the Hoyle Lake Hotel, and the healthful *agremens* of the scene, allured me hither. As yet my health has not received its hoped renovation; but they are early days of residence—a week only completed this evening

Avarice of sea-air tempted me to sit too often, and too long on the benches, placed on the edge of this verdant cliff, whose base is washed by the Irish Ocean. Accession of rheumatic pain and weakness has ensued.

Mr S.'s nervous complaints have increased so much since we lost yourself and Mrs Jauncey, as to render the filial cares and attentions of Mrs Smith necessary on his marine expedition. They purpose setting out for Park-Gate in a few days, which is twelve miles nearer Chester on this shore. The sea is but an estuary there; a ditch in comparison of this open and wide ocean; neither is the air half so pure as on these breezy and green cliffs. Yet all my persuasions prove ineffectual to allure them hither. They are possessed with an unfounded dread of the imaginary necessities of dress and ceremony in this hotel. It is certainly the resort of genteel people; yet is neither dress nor ceremony by any means the order of the day. We sit down thirty-five at meals. Arriving, I found only three in that circle whom I had previously seen; and to them I was but slightly known. It did not matter; acquaintance is soon formed, sufficient for all the purposes of cheerful association. "The feast of reason, and the flow of soul," were not the purpose of my journey.

Amongst a knot of young men of fortune, whose gigs, phaetons, and horses cover the downs often during the day, there is one of the name of B.; very *so so* as to features, complexion, or form; yet certain *know-not-what's* in his face recalled the impressions of former times; powerful, yet perplexed and obscure as the visions of the night. I found my eyes involuntarily attracted towards a countenance, where neither symmetry of features, or effusion of mind, requited my attention, yet was the contemplation interesting. In a few days chance explained this enigma in my feelings. A stranger arrived. Inquiring who he was of a lady who seemed to know him, she told me it was Mr T., young B.'s father. "How so?" She observed, that the son took his late mother's name, B., for an estate of her deceased brother's, Humphry B.

Then was the impression made by the little know-not-what's about the mouth and eyes of this ungraceful young man accounted for; and the pleasing companion of two delicious years of my rising womanhood, dear Fanny B., whom Mrs Jamcey also knew & I loved, though separated from us both through the long intervening period, came distinctly to my mind's eye from the face of this her son. With her image came also back the

vivid hopes, and the bounding health of that blossoming epoch.

Ah! what can the palled and vapid present supply to thrill the heart, like any circumstance which thus forcibly restores the dear delightful past,

> "When jocund days, that flew on rapid wing,
> Impurpled every flower that grac'd the spring,
> Breath'd subtler sweetness in the passing gales,
> With softer beauty deck'd the moon-light vales*."

You bid me look in Hume for testimony that three-parts of the nation wished success to the struggles of Charles the First to maintain and extend what he called the royal privileges, rather than that he should lose his crown and life. I am not mistress of Hume's history; but I have Rapin's, universally allowed the most impartial, though not the most eloquent of our historians. In consequence of your injunction, I read his reign of that rash, infatuated monarch, with the most sedulous attention. It records eternal provocations on the part of the king, determined to be satisfied with nothing less than absolute uncontrolled dominion: disgust, as reiterated, on the part of the

* From the author's poem Louisa.

people, strengthening, from time to time, with the enormity of his claims.

Now if, as Hume asserts, so large a majority of the nation had preferred slavery to resistance, whence the panic which paralyzed the royal armies? If, indeed, Hume's assertion is founded, what does it prove but the inefficience of an inert majority, opposed to the active struggles of a party, less numerous by two-thirds, but which was determined not to be enslaved? What but warning does it offer to the present kings of the earth, not to provoke their subjects; not obstinately to retain ministers of proved incompetence to protect the welfare of the people; not to saddle that people with multiplied taxes to gratify their own lust of war; not to rely upon the numeric superiority of their partizans?

Adieu!—It gratifies me to see you avow the pleasantness of those weeks which you and Mrs Jauncey recently passed beneath my roof, though Hygeia was but sullen with you, and though her favourite month so little deserved the title of blooming May,

"Her garlands immature, her rites unpaid."

LETTER LXXV.

Mrs Childers.

Hoyle Lake, Aug. 16, 1797.

Fervent are my congratulations on the late happy event, the new risen star in your domestic sphere. Discernment of human character, accurate as yours, convinces me that Colonel Childers is a very fortunate man. A few days before I left home, testimony, warm as your own, was given to the virtues and talents of your Selena. A young couple are just become inhabitants of Lichfield, to whom she is intimately known, Mr and Mrs Rickets. I passed an evening with them at the house of our mutual relations, Mr and Mrs Hinckley. I hear Mrs Rickets *loves* books, and poetic reading. For myself, it is seldom that a few hours association enables me to judge either of character, or understanding. You have had opportunities of sounding the depth of each in this pair—can tell me whether nature has been as kind to the heart and mind of this young lady, as it has been to her form; and whether or not I am likely to find more than merely pleasant visitors

in Mr and Mrs Rickets. It is, in general, all I allow myself to look for in strangers, especially where disparity of age renders the animated participation of ideas somewhat hopeless; but I was impressed in Mrs Rickets's favour by her glowing praise of Mrs Childers junior, and by the esteem she avowed for you.

The recurrence of new disease induced me to court the smiles of Hygeia on these amber sands and verdant downs. A poem in my late publication bears the name of this scene, Hoyle Lake, and the landscape of its singular and smiling graces is faithful. I wish you, at this juncture, to honour it with an attentive perusal, if the little miscellany, which contains it, is on your bookshelves. It will enable your lively imagination to receive the scene, as from the pencil; and your regard for the author, will make you pleased ideally to wander with her over the turfy, the level, and verdant plain, stretching wide round the hotel, and along the firm and sparkling sands,

> "Where, tossing the green sea-weed o'er and o'er,
> Creeps the hush'd billow on the shelly shore *."

* From the author's poem Louisa.

The apartments of this recently built hotel are airy, light, and pleasant, with spacious sash-windows, through which the eye always rests on verdure. A spirit of comfort and cleanliness presides here, rarely found in crowded hotels.

I arrived on the third of this month. We have several genteel and well-bred people,—a considerable portion of female youth and beauty,—young men of fortune and fashion to sing and dance with them;—yet is there little for the mind—little for which I could desire to change my lonely musings, as, leaning on my maid's arm, I rove, several times in every day, the soft green downs, whose lawny evenness is so favourable to feeble steps, and inhale the purest air imaginable, "that blows from off yon beaked promontory*," over the ever-restless, ever-renovated waters; or, descending to their edge, listen to their murmurings, and ponder their terrific powers, now hushed in calm and sunny suspension, while I recal the images of days and of forms that are fled.

Ah! it must be mind more raised above the common level, than we can hope to meet with often, that could tempt me to resign these pensive luxuries. At meals, and in the dusk evening hours, to join the company in circles of common-

* Orms-Head.

place conversation, or at the card-table, affords all the society that mere cheerfulness and good-breeding can induce me to wish for, with Beings so little known.

On the 6th arrived the fair frail Margravina of Anspach, attended only by domestics. The pride of virtue seemed prodigiously to alarm our ladies about the manner in which it would be proper to treat her; or whether they were to receive or decline her civilities, should they be offered; but the consultations proved needless,—she has lived wholly in private. I have seen her only once—it was on the stairs. On my stopping to give her way, a radiant smile of conciliation beamed from her eye and lip. I sighed to think that the heart, whose effluence that engaging smile seemed to be, could ever have been libertine.

Rural gales and home-comforts have, I trust, dispersed all remains of your late indisposition. The house of such a friend as you describe Mr Wodhal, has the ease of home without its domestic cares. To you also it is "redolent of youth and joy." Such intellectual fragrance must have a salutary correspondence with the functions of the body. I have not had the good fortune to meet with this gentleman's translation of Euripides; with Mr Potter's I am acquainted. I shall endeavour to procure Mr Wodhal's.

It gratifies me that you like my Langollen Vale, and its poetic sisters; and that the little filial poem of that collection interested you so much—though its poetic merit is of humbler claim than that of its companions. The wild and sombre darings of the Runic poem, Herva, have, of all that collection, met the highest praise from my lyric friends of the other sex. Mr Whalley of Bath, author of that beautiful touching domestic epic poem, Edwy and Edilda, asserts that my Herva excels Gray's descent of Odin in sublimity; yet certainly the Eyam—the Time Past—and three of the sonnets, viz. "Ingratitude,"—"Now dark December,'—and "Now young-eyed Spring," were poured more warmly from the heart.

Have you read Mrs Radcliffe's last novel, the Italian? Its language and its landscapes are, as usual with her pen, very good; the story also, as usual, toils after the terrible; but produces it, surely, with less effect than in her former publications. The incidents are confused, improbable, and ill-accounted for in the denouement. Some of the mysterious circumstances are left in impervious darkness. The attempts at humour, in the prate of the servant, entirely fail. He is not the Sancho of his Quixotte. We find little discrimination of character, except in the first de-

scription of the dark Schedoni. The inquisitorial terrors and persecutions are perhaps the most appalling of the gorgon powers in this violent, and, to me, not very interesting romance.

My letter was began some days ago. Indispensable demands upon my pen prevented its being finished till to-day, nearly as it had approached its limits. Meantime our hotel has become much more crowded, without becoming more pleasant. Aristocratic pride produces much impoliteness; and with the devotees of an ambition so unsocial, and so grovelling, my spirit can have no sympathy;—but walks of interesting contemplation, a forte-piano which I have hired and placed in my apartment, my books, and my pen, avert ennui from my retirements, and prevent me from perceiving myself in the number of those who hail the lapse of time, and rejoice in the death of the day. Adieu!

LETTER LXXVI.

The Right Hon. Lady Eleanor Butler, and Miss Ponsonby.

Lichfield, Oct. 2, 1797.

Ah! dearest Ladies, with what mixed sensations did I leave the Abyssinian valley! It was regret, gilded by a thousand charming recollections, the reflex of those three recorded days I passed, last month, beneath your roof;—of talents glowing on my understanding, of kindness engraven on my heart.

This was the state within, while the changing beauties of the vale rose, and slowly glided back from my sight as I journeyed.

It grew dark ere I reached Shrewsbury; where I found the Wingfield family under a cloud of apprehension and concern, on Lady Bagot's account, confined to her bed by fever, though it was believed that the dangerous crisis was over. Several letters have passed between Lord Bagot and myself; but our first personal intercourse commenced that evening. My father used to say he was the most classically learned nobleman he knew;

and he has much engaging benevolence in his countenance and manners; but exteriorly more broken and infirm than belongs to his time of life,—to autumnal years, on the verge of winter. The sobriety of his youth gave him a prospect of age, that should prove like a lusty winter, "frosty, but kindly." I fear it may not be. Many and severe have been his filial losses, and grief rivals the debilitating pleasures in its power of antedating decline. He spoke to me, as he had previously written, with mournful satisfaction concerning my epitaph on his daughter.

Leaving Shrewsbury at eight on Saturday morn, I reached Lichfield at shut of day, through heavy ways of wintry foulness. The dear spires gleamed dimly through the dusk horizon. My slow travel had been beguiled by tracing, in the volume so kindly given me, the long illustrious line of the Butler family. It seems that the spring of energetic wisdom, and of perfect honour, ran pure in the veins of its chieftains, till the jealousy of the rising house of Hanover, and its adherents, aspersed, with criminality, and punished with attainder and exile, the faithful and valiant defender of monarchy in the person of the Stuart princes—a jealousy, foolish and impolitic,

as its exertions were unjust and unworthy. Sweet was the zest supplied by my heart-dear knowledge of the daughter of that noble race, and superadded to the delight I always feel in perusing the records of civic and heroic virtues—but, alas! amid what veering governments, and perilous struggles, did both the Dukes of Ormond steer their unfaltering course!

I rejoice that when the Marquis, in 1648, abandoned the lieutenancy of Ireland, his cheerful presentiment of returning to it in happier times, was, twenty-six years after, so gloriously fulfilled.

Was it not extraordinary, that the Nero-hearted Sir Phelim O'Neal should become virtuous and just in the hour of death, and disdain to purchase the offered pardon, persisting in the falsehood and treachery which he had fabricated amid the triumphs of successful rebellion. Of him it may be indeed said—"Nothing in his life became him like its close."

Mr Saville and his daughter came home last night. They regret that, leaving Dinbren later than was their purpose, dread of night-travelling prevented their design of making a farewel call at the lovely retreat, according to the permission with which they had been honoured. Their recollections, like mine, banquet on your goodness,

passed and recent, and they present their most grateful respects.

The celebrated Dr Parr called at my house in my absence, and, not meeting with me, left a very kind letter. He is allowed to have been the only man who brought equal forces with Dr Johnson into the field of argument,—equal strength of native talents,—equal learning,—equal eloquence,—equal wit,—and equal effrontery. The day is recorded in which they measured their lances as chieftains of the Tory and Whig party. Never, it is said, was known such intellectual gladiatorship:

> "So frown'd the mighty combatants, that hell
> Grew darker at their frown—so match'd they stood!"

If, however, when provoked, their power to crush their opponents was equal, yet a great difference in mental temperament remains in favour of Dr Parr; since, when properly respected, he is kind and sunny of spirit, and punishes not, as the surly despot punished, a liberal and polite dissent from his opinions. Then, far from the Johnsonian niggardliness of praise, where deserved, he dispenses it bounteously; and none better know to give that praise characteristic discri-

mination, of which each of you have doubtless perused many instances.

I inclose a transcript of the poem*, whose subject had interested my charming friends, and induced their request of a copy. They will feel that its argumentative nature demanded strength and compression of style, rather than ornament, and that it restrained the sallies of poetic fancy.

The midnight hour has stolen upon my pen—therefore, with sentiments more affectionate than language knows to paint, I bid you both adieu.

LETTER LXXVII.

Rev. Dr Parr.

Lichfield, Oct. 6, 1797.

Unfortunately absent from Lichfield when you were so good to design me a long-desired honour and happiness, and my letters not forwarded, from the uncertainty of my residence after I

* The author's poem on the future existence of Brutes.

left High-Lake; this whole month's silence, that was unconscious, must have seemed ungrateful. Hospitable welcome and solicitation, protracted my visits in Wales beyond their purposed limits. Amongst many letters, which had long waited for me at home, yours is the earliest answered. And now I am sure you will receive with your wonted graciousness, my thanks for an intention, whose fruitlessness I mourn, and for a letter whose kindness I value.

Settled at home for the winter, I long to see Dr Parr my guest.

> "Ah! then I should not hear the winds of night,
> Nor count the heavy eave-drops as they fall."

My bookseller assured me he obeyed my orders in forwarding to you my Langollen-Vale publication—a scanty tribute of a boundless admiration.

Often does the Wellsburn circle of Christmas 1792 come back to my recollection; that circle, in which you sat, like the sun, cheering every heart, and illuminating every theme; but though Milton remains, dear Lycidas is gone!—so drop away, in succession, the withering joys of life. The oldest friend I had on earth, died in my last absence, the peculiarity of whose character induces me to talk of him to you;—the singularly co-

mic Rector Robinson, known and admired by that title (as if there had been no other rector), during his prime of manhood, in the fashionable circles of London, Bath, Scarborough and Harrowgate. His wit was distinct from that of all other men; while it consisted of perpetual ridicule, it was wholly void of the bitterness of sarcasm. We felt ourselves and our friends its object, without being pained, since it never glanced at any thing that was really disgraceful, while it was pointed enough to surprise, and consisted of ideas, so unexpectedly, so oddly combined, as to excite incessant risibility.

Had he not long shrunk from society, his death must have been extremely regretted in its convivial parties, since a twenty years retirement, so strict as to confine him wholly within the walls of his own house, and to exclude all but a very few intimate friends, had not, in the slightest degree, dampt the sportive sallies of his fancy. They played upon every subject, even the most serious, to his latest hour, like the lambent lightnings of a summer's evening, when the horizon is serene.

He read to the last with avidity, and he read every thing. His tenacious memory, and familiarity with the Latin and English classics, supplying apt quotations, added strength and brilliance

to wit and humour, that were unique in their kind, and exhaustless in their flow.

With all that gaiety of idea, he was a deep student in polemic writing; and, though he never went to church, yet when a sermon was preached, that seemed above the talents of the preacher, and its leading features were described to Mr Robinson, if the composition had been wholly, or in part, purloined from the printed works of abler divines, he seldom failed, almost instantly, to unveil the source of the plagiarism.

Your attention to the late unhappy* criminal, did great honour to your humanity; but there was no possibility of saving him, consistent with the general safety. Too frequently, in recent times, has madness extended its shield over murder; and under that encouragement, instances of the crime multiplied fast. Madness, as well as guilt, is awed by the dread of punishment. People daily walk at large with a tincture of insanity, strong enough to be perceived, yet not strong enough to justify confinement. If a jury is not to consider such people accountable for the blood they may shed, we do indeed stand in jeopardy every hour.

* Mr Oliver the Surgeon, who shot the father of a Lady to whom he was attached, in revenge for parental opposition to his wishes.—*S.*

With every esteem, every honour for talents and learning, which are the boast of the present period, I remain, dear sir, your faithful, obliged, and obedient servant.

LETTER LXXVIII.

Rev. T. S. Whalley.

Lichfield, Oct. 10, 1797.

I am indebted to you for two welcome letters. By the kind solicitude for me which the last expresses,

> "The very middle of my heart is warmed
> And takes it thankfully."

My health has certainly received benefit from my excursion; from my nineteen oceanic immersions; and for the exquisitely pure air of the High-Lake shore and Downs. From thence Emral, the large, the venerable, and ancient seat of the Palistons, near Wrexham, where my friend Mrs Price now resides, received me. When she heard

of our friends Mr Saville and his daughter being at Park-Gate, she wrote to them, expressing kind hopes that the Nightingales would not fly so near without visiting her bower. In consequence of this letter, they joined us at Emral, and Mr Hayman, also one of the best dilettanti singers in England. Mrs Price sent her chaise to Wrexham for Randall and his harp. The force, the pathos, the imagination, the elegance with which he wakes the living strings, are transcendent. He took our imprisoned spirits, and "wrapt them in Elysium." Nor less was he charmed with the vocal duetts and trios of our syrenic friends. They went with me from Emral to Dinbren. There we passed a very pleasant week, and "drank the etherial gales" on the brow of that sublime eminence, on which stands Mr Roberts' house. In every fair gleam of the varying and splenetic weather, we walked over his new made terrace, whose prospect eclipses that of the terrace at Ludlow, in the great superiority of its bird's-eye prospect. It commences from the very door of the house, whose situation is in itself so singularly, so grandly lovely, and it winds to the right, round the bosom of the mountain, from which elevation we look back on the Vale of Langollen beneath us, with its town and bridge; on the conic mountain, crowned with the bleak ruins of castle Dinas Bran,

and the vast gray barren Eglwsig rocks. Before us wind the successive vales of Valle Crucis, Landisillio, Landrynien, and Corven, with round and lesser mountains, some sylvan and others bare, tumbled amongst the vallies, like the huge billows of a stormy ocean; while the Deva foams over its rocky channel, now hid, now seen, along the sweep of scenes, romantic and varied in the loveliest excess:

> ——— "For nature here
> Wantons, as in her prime, and plays at will
> Her virgin fancies."

My destined week of elevated situation past, I sought the vale, and swiftly flew three days of high gratification, scenic and intellectual, with the charming Rosalind and Celia of this lovelier Arden. A couple of days passed at Shrewsbury, in the Wingfield society, finished my tour.

And now let me resume your letters, and repeat my helpless sympathy on that subject, which is the corrosive leaven of all your comforts. Alas! I thought how it would prove!—that the penitence would not be lasting; and I fear that penitence, which was either hypocritical assumption, or the baseless result of present suffering, by exciting pity, which always softens the justest indignation, would increase the anguish in which your

recollection of the fair criminal is steept. With compassion rushes back upon the heart the full measure of its former affection. Her new dereliction will, however, for the present at least, prevent the repetition of those letters of hers, which must torture you to no purpose.

If she had either shame, or one spark of regard for your peace, far from seeking to obtrude on your mind the image which her crimes have polluted, she would wish for nothing so much as to be, "like those that are wounded and lie in the grave, out of remembrance, and cut away from your hand."

Ardently do I wish that your hopes of the total downfal of jacobinism, and the revival of fixed and subordinate government in France, may be better founded than your former dependence proved; but I am convinced it will never be, while other powers continue to war against her. That is the bond of Gallic union—the only bond,—but it is invincible. See, on the first rest of the sword, what civil commotions arose in that country, so pre-eminently wretched, amid the splendour of its victories!

If the terms of restitution of all we have taken from France and her allies in this fatal conflict, are those on which they would consent to give us peace, our cabinet has been as infatuated in re-

jecting them, as they were when they insulted negotiation by demanding back the conquered Netherlands; for which, as nothing could be an adequate compensation, it was certain they would not capitulate.

How much better for England, who has more foreign possessions than she can maintain without expence which makes them a curse to her, that France should recover by degrees her share in the commerce of Europe, and either India; that her sons should tranquillize and turn their attention from wars, to trade and the arts; than that they should continue an armed banditti in the heart of Europe, ruining commercial nations with the expence of opposing them.

If that unavailing opposition continues, we shall in another year solicit peace, with the offered restitution of all they now demand from us, without being able to obtain it.

Gentlemen of the landed-interest, who have so insanely supported our belligerent minister, want bleeding copiously—in their wealth I mean. It is but now that the wounds are opening. They will soon find their blustering courage faint, and sicken under the drain. When the old land-tax has been bought up, a new one will be brought forward, to supply the deficiency of state income

which that mortgage must cause, while the ready money it brings will sink in the sanguine gulf.

I fear we have not received our measure of punishment for the root of all this evil,—our tyrannous attempt upon the freedom of America. She has obtained real freedom—but France has nothing but the name.

Your venerable mother's health, activity, and intellects, at ninety, bid fair for her centennial birth-day. May we all drink her health when it arrives, with hearts on which no calamity, public or private, shall sit heavy! Adieu!

END OF VOLUME FOURTH.

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